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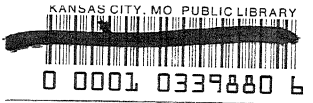

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My Fighting Congregation

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My Fighting Congregation

CHAPLAIN WILLIAM C. TAGGART
(U.S. Army)

and CHRISTOPHER CROSS

Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

1943

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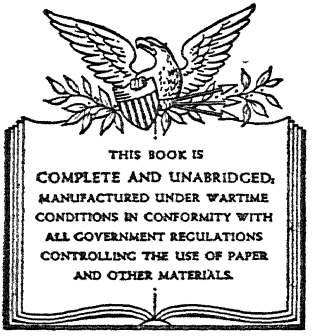

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FIRST EDITION

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To the chaplains of all religious faiths who have served and are serving America's fighting congregation this book is dedicated.

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Foreword

THE STORY of the service of our army chaplains goes back to our American Revolution, when General George Washington appointed the first clergyman as a chaplain.

Since 1776, in peace as well as in war, clergymen of all faiths have served in the armed forces.

Never before, however, in the history of our nation has there been so great a need for the spiritual guidance of the Church than in this world struggle against the forces of brutality and aggression. For this is a war against hatred, persecution, and godlessness; a war against a combination of evil men who would take from us the very liberties for which our forefathers came to this land. If we are to succeed in this titanic battle for God's truth and justice on earth, then we must be guided by His wisdom and strengthened by His power.

Just as have all Americans, so the members of the various religious faiths have given generously of their personnel so that in our camps, at home, at bases throughout the world,

and particularly in the midst of battle, our men may have near them, whenever possible, a clergyman of their own faith.

Although the experiences of only one of our chaplains are used by the writer, Christopher Cross, in *My Fighting Congregation*, this book vividly mirrors the work of all our chaplains now serving throughout the world.

My Fighting Congregation I hope will give the people a clearer understanding of the work of our chaplains and of the need for clergymen of faith, courage, and self-sacrificing devotion.

WILLIAM R. ARNOLD
Chief of Chaplains

Introduction

I AM NO book-writing minister, I told the Doubleday, Doran Company when they suggested that I write about my experiences as a chaplain with the United States Army Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific.

I want to be just as honest with my readers as I was with the publishers. I have merely related to Christopher Cross those incidents, observations, and experiences that seem important to me. Mr. Cross has organized the material into this book.

We hear much about how our Army is the best fed and best clothed in the world. This has given great comfort to millions of parents, wives, and relatives of our servicemen. Often when I was privileged to help an American soldier I thought how happy his folks would be to know that their boy's spiritual needs are also satisfied even though he is thousands of miles from home.

It is my hope that by relating my experiences Americans everywhere will gain new comfort from the knowledge that

wherever their boys are there is a chaplain within call to conduct a service; to lead them in prayer; to give comfort to the sick and troubled: and to give burial, whenever possible according to the dictates of their own religion, to those of our men who must die.

I made no notes while I was on the Pacific, in Java, and Australia. There was little time for that. I have, therefore, had to depend on letters, my memory, and to a large extent on the co-operation of the men of the 19th Bombardment Group who returned, and the relatives of those who did not. In this respect invaluable assistance was given by Colonel Richard Carmichael, Major John H. M. Smith, Staff Sergeant Henry Vierow, Lieutenant Alva S. Hascall, Lieutenant James Worley, and many others.

For their co-operation my sincere gratitude to Chaplain William R. Arnold, Chief of Chaplains, United States Army; Chaplain Joseph O. Ensrud, Technical Information Division, Office Chief of Chaplains; Chaplain Harry C. Fraser, Army Air Forces Liaison Division, Office Chief of Chaplains; and Colonel Loring Pickering.

My appreciation to Dr. L. Q. Campbell, of Hardin-Simmons University, and Mr. W. T. Conner, of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, for their guidance.

And, finally, my mother and father to whom I shall always be indebted for their inspiration and prayers for me and the men I served.

CHAPLAIN WILLIAM C. TAGGART

The following are the chaplains of the United States Army who are casualties since Pearl Harbor. Because of the uncertainties of war this list may not be complete.

Barron, Theodore W.	Disciples of Christ	Wenatchee, Washington
Baumann, Herman C.	Roman Catholic	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Bell, Hoke S.	Methodist	Halycon Dale, Georgia
Borneman, John K.	Presbyterian	Niagara Falls, New York
Brach, Stanley C.	Roman Catholic	Hoboken, New Jersey
Braun, Albert W.	Roman Catholic	Mescalero, New Mexico
Brown, Ralph W. D.	Methodist	Gooding, Idaho
Carberry, Richard	Roman Catholic	Silverton, Oregon
Cleveland, Arthur V.	Disciples of Christ	St. Louis, Missouri
Coleman, Burton Henry	Methodist	Maypearl, Texas
Connolly, Edward	Roman Catholic	Australia
Cummings, William T.	Roman Catholic	Philippine Islands
Curran, John L.	Roman Catholic	Ponchatoula, Louisiana
Daniel, Eugene L.	Presbyterian	Atlanta, Georgia
Dawson, William	Baptist (North)	Camarillo, California
Day, Morris E.	Baptist (South)	Rockwell, Texas
Donald, Samuel E.	Methodist	Newport News, Virginia
Dubberly, Lennie S.	Methodist	Woodsboro, Texas
Duffy, John E.	Roman Catholic	Toledo, Ohio
Dugan, John J.	Roman Catholic	Boston, Massachusetts
Falter, Clement M.	Roman Catholic	St. Joseph College, Indiana
Flaherty, Patrick X.	Catholic	Chicago, Illinois
Fox, George L.	Methodist	Gilman, Vermont
Goode, Alexander D.	Jewish	York, Pennsylvania
Goodfellow, Rollin	Congregational-Christian	Biddeford, Maine
Gough, Lawrence A.	Roman Catholic	Yonkers, New York
Gravely, Horace E.	Methodist	Belton, South Carolina
Hahn, Clyde R.	Lutheran	West Columbia, South Carolina
Hall, Raymond Lee	Congregational	Dover, New Hampshire
Hand, Francis E.	Methodist	Bayville, New Jersey
Hanson, Chester Pearl	Baptist	Burlington, Vermont
Hart, Albert McCabe	Presbyterian	Buffalo, Wyoming

Howden, Frederick B.	Episcopal	Roswell, New Mexico
Humphrey, Robert H.	Methodist	Mathews, Virginia
Kane, Stephen W.	Roman Catholic	Osceola, Iowa
Kennedy, Hugh F.	Roman Catholic	Philippine Islands
Kines, Louis B.	Roman Catholic	Great Mills, Maryland
Lafleur, Joseph V.	Roman Catholic	Abbeville, Louisiana
Liston, James M.	Roman Catholic	Naperville, Illinois
Loeber, Paul E.	Lutheran	North Plymouth, Massachusetts
Macdonald, Ernest W.	Congregational-Christian	Garden City, Kansas
McDonnell, John J.	Roman Catholic	Brooklyn, New York
Miller, Frank L.	Presbyterian	Stirling, New Jersey
Newton, Cuthbert P.	Baptist	Trenton, New Jersey
O'Brien, James W.	Roman Catholic	San Jose, California
O'Keefe, Eugene J.	Roman Catholic	Philippine Islands
Oliver, Alfred C.	Methodist	Millville, New Jersey
Poling, Clark V.	Reformed Church in America	Schenectady, New York
Reilly, Stanley J.	Roman Catholic	San Francisco, California
Savignac, Valmore G.	Roman Catholic	Oakland Beach, Rhode Island
Scecina, Thomas J.	Roman Catholic	Indianapolis, Indiana
Sharp, Curtis Joseph	Roman Catholic	Spokane, Washington
Stober, Henry B.	Roman Catholic	Williamstown, Kentucky
Talbot, Albert D.	Roman Catholic	Fall River, Massachusetts
Taylor, Robert P.	Baptist (South)	Fort Worth, Texas
Thompson, Kenneth L.	Baptist (North)	Rawlins, Wyoming
Tiffany, Frank L.	Presbyterian	Sandpoint, Idaho
Turner, Guy H.	Baptist	Memphis, Tennessee
Vandepheiden, Joseph G.	Roman Catholic	Conception, Missouri
Washington, John P.	Roman Catholic	Arlington, New Jersey
Wilcox, Perry O.	Methodist	Grover, Pennsylvania
Wilson, John A.	Roman Catholic	Lyons, Kansas
Youngdahl, David H.	Baptist (North)	San Francisco, California
Zerfas, Mathias E.	Roman Catholic	Fond du Lac, Wisconsin
Zimerman, Jerl D.	Presbyterian	Lead, South Dakota
Zimmerman, Leslie F.	Disciples of Christ	Fort Missoula, Montana

My Fighting Congregation

Chapter One

WAR CAME TO US as I was conducting a Sunday service on a transport bound for the Philippines.

While we were gathered to pray and hear God's word on the old S.S. *Republic,* ten days out of Honolulu, the news of Pearl Harbor reached us.

There are some situations for which a man can just never be prepared. At religious school we never considered what to do if, while leading a service, we suddenly learned that our congregation was at war.

Yet that is exactly what I faced on that peaceful Sunday morning. At nine o'clock I had a khaki-clad congregation whose thoughts were far removed from war. Within a half-hour we were on a journey that would leave some of us sick and crippled; a journey from which many of us would never return; a journey that none of us would ever forget.

Sunday chapel was becoming more popular with the men each succeeding week. There's not much activity for soldiers on a transport. The navy personnel handles the ship

while the soldiers, aside from a few duties, are passengers. After a couple of weeks at sea most of the men began to look forward to religious services. They wandered into the big lounge from the deck, from their posts, and from the hold of the ship. It was unbearably hot, for we had only yesterday crossed the equator. Although it wasn't yet nine o'clock the men's shirts were already visibly wet with perspiration. And while we waited for the others to come we stood about in groups talking—just as we used to at home in front of the church.

I liked seeing Hal Walling and Tommy Whitehead at services. Hal and Tommy had both attended my mission in Wichita Falls, Texas.

"Just like home, eh, Chaplain Bill?" said Hal as he passed with Tommy at his side. In the middle of the Pacific a simple religious service helped bring home closer to many of us.

"Chaplain," a soldier said as I was putting the hymnbooks on the table, "you know that sermon you preached last Sunday reminded me of one I heard more than a year ago. My mother and wife were with me . . ."

It reminded me, too, of another sermon on another Sunday in Big Springs, Texas. I had already made my decision. A minister belonged with the men being prepared for the inevitable war. A minister belonged with the men who would soon be called upon to rid the world of the pagan menace. I was no different from Hal Walling or Tommy Whitehead. I, too, had a service to give to my country.

But because of my decision several of the congregation would not come to church that Sunday. I was "participating in war," they said. A minister, they insisted, should not

help his country even if its existence was at stake. He should just stay at home while the men in his congregation gave their lives for the very religion he was preaching.

Excited voices off to my right brought me out of my thoughts. Charlie was demanding, "Tell me, somebody, what's today's date?"

Someone demanded: "Why, y'gotta date, Charlie?" Another: "Yeh, you goin' sumplace?"

"It's December 7, Charlie," I managed to squeeze in.

"Then it may be here now!"

That brought more questions. "What may be here now?" "Yeh, what're you talkin' about?"

Charlie tried to get away from the group. "Need some help, Chaplain Taggart?"

"Come on, tell what may be here now!" they persisted. "You can't get away from us now."

"It's just my baby, fellers." Charlie gulped, embarrassed. "Jean, my wife, said that a couple of weeks before Christmas I might be a father. . . ."

That's the way it went that morning. Before beginning services we just stood around talking about the things dearest to us: our homes, our families, our sweethearts, our friends. Above the scraping of the chairs, as the men settled down with their life vests at their side, I heard a friendly voice call: "Give us a good sermon today, Chaplain Bill."

I wish there could have been a good sermon that Sunday morning—a sermon that would have helped prepare them for what was to come. But on that Sunday, December 7, there was no sermon. The Japs interrupted it.

We had finished our prayer and had sung our second

hymn with George Barker leading the singing. I had just concluded the reading from the Scriptures and was about to begin my sermon when I noticed Chaplain John Kinney, the transport chaplain, coming toward me from the back of the room.

I sensed something was wrong. Chaplain Kinney had been conducting services for officers at another end of the deck. One lounge couldn't hold both the officers and enlisted men. Chaplain Kinney should have been in the middle of his service. I went to meet him.

"It's happened, Bill!" he whispered. "The Japs have attacked Pearl Harbor. We're at war!"

"Shall I tell the men?"

"No, just dismiss them."

I walked quickly to the front of the room and looked into the faces of my congregation as they waited for me to begin my sermon. I looked over their heads and through a porthole and saw an ocean that might now be hiding enemy submarines. I caught a glimpse of the hot blue sky that might at any moment become a backdrop for bombers to blast at our ship. I saw in front of me Hal Walling and Tommy Whitehead and began to think of peaceful Wichita Falls. I heard the murmur of voices as the men became restless and wondered why I didn't proceed, so I quickly said, "You are dismissed."

They started to come to the front of the room as they usually did. But this time they would want to know why the service hadn't been finished. Before they got to me the order boomed over the public-address system: "Lay down to your quarters . . . lay down to your quarters . . . lay down to your quarters."

Chapter Two

WHY DID THE NEWS that we were at war leave me so stunned? I had felt all along that it was coming.

While in Wichita Falls, Texas, words like "isolationist" and "interventionist" were becoming popular, millions throughout the world were being starved, crippled, left homeless, and slaughtered. Churches were being razed. At the point of the bayonet the Bible was being replaced by *Mein Kampf*. If it could be done in Europe, then they would sooner or later try it in the United States—in Wichita Falls.

No, the war came as no great surprise. I was on this transport, wearing a soldier's uniform, just because I expected war. And what I had seen in Honolulu only confirmed my expectations. Newspaper headlines on November 28 screamed: "HONOLULU ON ALERT." At cafés, in hotel lobbies, at railroad stations, wherever I went it was apparent in the conversations I overheard that an early attack was feared. On the streets of Honolulu were armed guards and roving patrols.

It was the sudden realization of my responsibilities that perplexed me. I was a soldier in this army charged with helping to defeat the enemy just as surely as the gunner or the bombardier in a B-17; just as surely as the soldier in the artillery or infantry. I could give cheer, encouragement, and God's blessing to men embarking on dangerous missions. In combat, when men's minds, nerves, and body have been tried beyond all possible endurance, I could give them renewed strength and courage. My work, if properly performed, could help attain victory as directly as a well-placed bomb on an enemy warship.

I paused for a moment at the deck railing and prayed that God would give me the strength, the courage, and the wisdom to properly serve my fighting congregation.

I went down the stairs and through the narrow corridors to my stateroom on the deck below. I was gripped with fear for the safety of the eight transport and cargo ships that made up our convoy. I couldn't get out of my mind the smiling face of the cabdriver in Honolulu who said as we entered his taxi, "We were expecting you."

"Expecting us?" I asked.

"Yes."

"You knew we were coming?"

"Oh yes, we knew you were coming. And your convoy is going to the Philippines."

We looked at each other in the taxi, astonished. He knew the name of our ships, when we were expected, where we were going. Our destination was "Plum." That's all we knew. And here was a taxi driver in Honolulu saying that everyone knew our destination. We thought about it for a few minutes, but soon forgot the incident as we tried to see

as much of Honolulu in the few remaining hours before sailing time.

But now the taxi driver's face was before me. His words kept going through my mind: "We were expecting you. You're on your way to the Philippines." The words took on new significance. If everyone in Honolulu knew about us, then the Japs would know too. Would our escort, the U.S.S. *Pensacola* and the light yacht that served as our subchaser, be able to hold off a pack of submarines or a squadron of Zeros?

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When I entered my cabin Lieutenant James Tull, who shared quarters with me, was about to leave.

"What do you think, Jim?"

"Quicker it starts, the quicker it'll be over," he replied casually as he left the cabin.

I sat on my bunk and thought how swiftly events had moved since I first met Jim at the army air base in Salt Lake City, Utah. We were both reporting for duty, Jim as a lieutenant in the Air Corps and I as a chaplain. Jim noticed the cross on my shirt, one of the insignia of the Corps of Chaplains, and introduced himself.

He, too, had been a minister until he had been called up as a reserve line officer. His pastorate had been in Frankfort, Kentucky. So we sat there outside the commanding officer's quarters chatting about his wife, my parents, and our mutual friend, Homer Reynolds, now an army chaplain at the Davis-Montham Field in Tucson, Arizona.

Tull, who has since become a chaplain with one of the fighter groups under General Chennault in the Far East,

was a serious student of Greek. We spent many pleasant hours at his apartment with his wife, Virginia, discussing religious literature and the relationship of the Church to war.

All this debate about whether or not ministers should join the Army was so academic, we agreed. Did they think that when men became soldiers they ceased to be God's children? Did a uniform eliminate the need of the influence of the Church? Why didn't they visit the army camps and see for themselves that military life often intensified emotions and created problems which a chaplain could best solve.

I sat on my bunk and wondered if, now that war had finally come, they were still debating in Wichita Falls—and in thousands of other towns and cities—if it's right for a Christian to fight; if it's right for a clergyman to minister to the men at war.

I saw Jim Tull's civilian suit hanging on the wall. It had been nice to change into civvies every evening for dinner on board ship, I thought. It would be a long time, I was sure, before I'd be needing my civvies again. We were now wartime officers, and the orders would undoubtedly come through soon to wear army uniforms only. When we left San Francisco on November 21 we were permitted to take our civilian clothes, tennis rackets, cameras, golf clubs, and other personal effects.

I was folding my civvies when I heard a knock on my door. An enlisted man entered. He stood for a moment at the door. I motioned him to sit down next to me on the bunk.

"No, I'd better go," he stammered. "There's nothing you can do."

"Come in and sit down. Tell me all about it. Maybe there is something I can do."

He had returned to his quarters in the hold of the ship from chapel a few minutes ago. They had announced over the public-address system that Pearl Harbor had been attacked.

"I had to get a message to my wife and so I came to you. But I guess it's hopeless. The wireless can't be used."

"But why must you get a message to your wife now?" I asked.

"The shock of my leaving gave her a nervous breakdown. She's been very sick. I'm afraid of what will happen to her now. She may think I was at Pearl Harbor."

There was no use telling this man not to worry about his wife. It would have no effect. Yet, worrying about her would unquestionably affect his work as a soldier. It would render him less effective in carrying out his duties if our ship were attacked by enemy planes or subs. He needed faith in a power greater than himself—a power that would look after him and his wife.

"Why don't you pray with me? Let's tell God our problem. Let's have faith in Him. Let's give Him a chance to look after your wife . . ."

"But I've never prayed," he interrupted. "I'm not a member of a church. I don't know how to pray."

"Let me show you how. Let's bow our heads in prayer."

As we sat there together on my bunk I am sure that my anxiety was equal to his. I wanted so to transfer my faith to

him. This man would be a better soldier if he could be relieved of his burden—if he could be given faith in God.

"This man at my side, Father, is here because he is worried about his wife. He wants her to know that he is safe so that anxiety about him will not aggravate her weak body. Father, we know that we can come to You for help for we are Your children. Christ said: 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' Give this man the peace of mind that comes from having faith in You, Father—faith that if You will it his wife will somehow learn that he is well. We thank You, Father. Amen."

Four months later, at an advanced base in Northern Australia, this same man came to my tent. He had a letter from his wife. "Go on, Chaplain, read it," he said.

The letter was dated "December 8, 1941. Last night I went to sleep after a miserable day of worry about you. During the night I dreamed about you. You were well. In my dream you were not at Pearl Harbor when the attack took place. I prayed that morning that the dream was the truth. That dream helped me live through those long weeks until I received your letter from Australia. . . ."

Against the roar of a B-17 about to leave on a mission I thanked God for hearing my prayer that this soldier, worrying about his wife, might be given faith.

Chapter Three

By the time noonday chow was over, the organization for protecting our transport against enemy attack was well under way. General Julian F. Barnes, senior officer on the ship, took command. The sergeants' lounge on the forward main deck became headquarters for the staff. In addition to General Barnes, the staff consisted of Captain Roscoe Nichols, who commanded the ground forces of a bombardment group from Salt Lake City; Colonel Thorpe, who commanded field artillery from Texas—now known as the "Lost Battalion"—and others.

Within a few hours three thousand men were turned into a fighting unit prepared for any emergency. Portholes and windows were being blacked out. Guard details were posted throughout the ship. Lookouts were stationed day and night to watch the sea for hostile craft; to watch the sky for enemy planes. Guns were hoisted on deck and placed in position.

I watched this activity as I proceeded to staff headquar-

ters where General Barnes wanted to see me. People don't usually think of a chaplain as a man of action—certainly not one who should be painting portholes or helping to assemble guns. He is generally associated with the bowed head. But in all respects the chaplain is like the other officers and enlisted men. His love for his country is like theirs. He shares with them their desire to defeat the enemy. I wanted so much to be an active part of this preparation as I walked to General Barnes's quarters.

"Tonight our commander in chief, President Roosevelt, will speak on the radio," General Barnes said. "I want all men, except those with specific duties, to be on deck. After the President speaks let's have a singsong. Let's have stirring, spirited songs."

I had an important function to perform, General Barnes wanted me to know. The morale of the men must be at the highest possible level since anything might happen. Their spare time must be occupied. He wanted no brooding, no worrying about possible attack.

I left staff headquarters feeling taller and stronger. I had a job to do—an important job. I was part of that group working on those French 75's; part of that group pushing those cases; part of those three thousand men preparing to defend the transport.

While I was getting ready for the singsong I could hear the noises of the men working. There seemed to be a harmony between these noises and the sound of the typewriter and mimeograph machine printing the songs we were to sing.

That was a strange assortment of songs. "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here," followed by "Dark Eyes." Then "Carry

Me Back to Old Virginny," "Funiculi, Funicula," "I've Been Working on the Railroad," and "Battle Cry of Freedom." There were songs familiar to all of us: "Auld Lang Syne," "Yankee Doodle," "Dixie," "The Man on the Flying Trapeze," and "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

The men converged on A, B, and C decks in answer to the orders on the public-address system. They sat on the decks and booms, sprawled on hatches and lifeboats, and crowded against the railings to hear the President speak.

Now we would know the truth. Those reports were probably exaggerated, some thought. There couldn't have been so much damage at Pearl Harbor. Didn't that navy officer whose wife was near Pearl Harbor tell us about the powerful installations there? They probably dropped a few bombs. But our big guns opened up, our fighters got into the air, and the Japs ran—those that could get away. That's what the President would tell us. Or maybe it was all a mistake. The Japs may have dropped a bomb, apologized, offered to pay for the damages, and that was that. Perhaps after the President spoke we would dismantle our guns and proceed to our original destination. No more blackout; no more twenty-four-hour watch. We would go to our cabins and take out our civilian clothes to wear to dinner again.

Staff Sergeant Paul S. Coburn, of Logan, Utah, and Technical Sergeant Jack E. Larsen, of Ogden, Utah, were among those with me on one of the hatches on A deck where the microphones had been set up. Larsen, who had been a member of the Mormon Temple Choir in Salt Lake City, was to lead the singing. Coburn was nervously plucking the strings of his guitar when the radio announcer was heard introducing the President.

"A state of war exists between Japan and the United States of America . . ."

These are the only words of the President's speech I remember. The rest of the speech became indistinct because of the thoughts that raced through my mind.

Below at my right was that navy officer who had told us about the strong installations at Pearl Harbor. Now he could be sure that Japanese bombs had fallen on Pearl Harbor where his wife, pregnant with his child, was living.

And where was the Navy Chaplain Forsander of San Diego, California, who had left our transport at Honolulu to join one of the battleships at Pearl Harbor? Was he never again to bring warmth and good cheer to men, as he had to those of us who had known him on that brief journey?

There were Hal Walling and Tommy Whitehead. Just a little while ago they were walking down Lamar Avenue in their new army uniforms. The neighbors said about Hal and Tommy what they did about the others: "It won't be for long. Army life'll do them some good." And Hal and Tommy said to their neighbors what others have said: "The change'll do us good. . . . Was getting soft anyhow. . . . A year in camp'll toughen us up. . . ."

And now Hal and Tommy were on a transport in the middle of the Pacific, life vests in their laps, listening to the President tell them they were at war while the ocean and sky all around was being searched for the enemy.

I saw one of the gun crews ready to spring into action at the signal that the enemy was sighted, and thought of the empty seats in church that Sunday in Big Springs, Texas. Those who had refused to come to my service because I had joined the Army, what were they thinking as they listened

now to the President? Did they still believe that I should not be on this ship with Hal and Tommy and the many others facing unknown dangers and possible death?

From what I have since learned from the men on that transport, I am not at all surprised that the first song following President Roosevelt's speech was lacking in spirit. Too many of the men were thinking of home, just as I was. This was one moment when we knew exactly where our loved ones were. We could see them at the radio in the room we knew so well. We could see them sitting in the familiar chairs, their faces tense as they listened to the message of the head of the state.

However, there was no lack of enthusiasm after the first song. The voices rang out from every corner of the ship with "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here." I looked across the water at the seven other ships trailing us at half-mile intervals and hoped they could hear our voices.

We finished the prepared list of songs a few minutes before dusk, when we would have to leave the decks and prepare for our first blackout. In the remaining minutes we sang songs requested by the men. I remember that many asked for popular sentimental ballads.

There was no need for a speech to end that singsong. In their singing the men had expressed everything: their loneliness, their fears, their determination.

Robert J. Warren, from Athens, Ohio, a technical sergeant, passed me as I was getting off the hatch and said: "I feel like a kid who's just seen a Boris Karloff picture and is scared, but doesn't know of what."

Chapter Four

I CLIMBED into my upper bunk fully clothed that first night at war. I wanted to be ready for any emergency. Carefully I examined my life vest. I strapped it around my chest and went through the motions of diving. I hoped these life vests really kept one afloat because I couldn't swim. My steel helmet was at my side. If we had to abandon ship I mustn't forget to take the knife. It would be handy, the boys had told me, to cut fish or to hack my way through the jungle. I shook the canteen to make sure it was filled with water. I checked my flashlight to see if it was in order, and looked at the contents of my emergency medical kit. In the corner of the bunk I made a neat pile of all the small New Testaments I had in the cabin. If the order came to lower the lifeboats, I'd stuff the Testaments into my pockets and under my shirt.

And that Bible Homer Reynolds had given me when I joined the Army—I mustn't forget that. I opened the zipper cover and read his inscription on the flyleaf: "May God's

richest blessings rest upon you in your ministry. My prayers will follow you wherever you serve. The greatest ministry needed today is a shepherd ministry like Christ's."

Homer had been so certain that joining the service was the right thing to do. I wish I could have been so sure. It would have been easier. There wouldn't have been all those months of emotional conflict; those difficult months of trying to decide whether it's right for a Christian to fight.

The calling of the National Guard into service reawakened in me thoughts of joining the Army as a chaplain. Within a few days after President Roosevelt ordered the National Guard into training for a year the effects were felt in Wichita Falls. Suddenly George Bruce was in uniform and on his way to an army camp. He was leaving his wife, Jo. He wasn't going to be working at the Texas Electric Company any more. George wasn't going to be at the mission any more to lead Boy Scout Troop 19. Tommy Whitehead and Hal Walling were leaving for camp too. There must be some connection, I thought, between the devastation in Europe and the movement of our men in Wichita Falls to army camps.

The months that followed only increased the conflict within me. Selective Service began to take more and more men from our community. London was blitzed, Coventry destroyed, and they kept repeating: "It's not our war. . . . Turn the other cheek. . . . Christians don't kill. . . . Christ said love your enemy. . . . They started it, let them finish it. . . . We have two oceans to keep us out of it. . . ."

I looked to my parents for guidance. But to them I wasn't a minister. I was their son. To them the Army meant only

danger, perhaps death. They had already lost Mary. My sister had been married to a sergeant. She died at the army post where she was living with her husband. They associated my joining the Army with my sister's death. Two of their children had died at childbirth. Their first child had died at the age of three. Now only I was left.

I had come to Abilene from Wichita Falls to have a long talk with my father about becoming a chaplain in the Army. Dad was sitting in his rocker, the Abilene *Reporter News* in his lap. He listened attentively.

"You'll have to make up your own mind, Son," he said as he picked up his magnifying glass from the table and began to look at his newspaper. I knew, however, he wasn't reading. He wanted to avoid the subject. It had come up constantly each time I came home. He, too, was uncertain —torn between the emotions of parental love and duty.

"But, Dad, I've got to make a decision soon."

My father carefully folded the newspaper and placed it on the table near his rocker. He straightened his tall, thin body as he walked across the room. He stopped by the window and looked across the street at the Hardin-Simmons University from which I had graduated. He walked to the other end of the room and stopped before a picture of Grandfather Taggart as if to ask his advice.

Near Rotan, Texas, in a rural community called Highland Home, Grandfather Taggart had raised his eighteen children. All week he farmed, and on Sunday he preached the gospel to his neighbors. His land is now the site of a church which his money helped to build. Uneducated himself, he contributed considerable money to the Hardin-

Simmons University which my father had attended before me.

"William, I can't advise you," Dad finally said. "I'm a minister. I know nothing about soldiering. To serve among civilians is all I've experienced—all I know. I am sure only that a shepherd belongs with his flock."

"But, Dad, they're going into the Army. The people, our congregation, they're preparing for war. I feel I belong with them."

"The thought of you in uniform among soldiers frightens me."

Mother was in the kitchen. Although she was finished with her work, she would stay there quietly for a while listening, and soon she would come into the room, her opinions fairly leaping from her.

"What's all this talk about uniforms and soldiers?" Mother demanded of my father, as she entered the room. And before an answer could be formulated she continued: "You didn't have a uniform, but you were a soldier sure as we're here when that flu epidemic struck Raton about twenty-two years ago. It was real war fighting that plague, and you joined the ranks and did your duty. Day and night you were with the sick and dying with that foul, warm odor of the disease all around you. Your congregation was in trouble and you were with them always. Every day we expected that William, you, or I would be stricken. We went to bed each night wondering if we'd be well enough to continue the work. But we didn't stop to consider the risk. God had work for us to do and His unseen hand sheltered us. In sub-zero cold you went from grave to grave burying the dead."

"There was nothing else to do, Mother," Dad replied calmly. His cheeks seemed thinner, almost sunken.

"There's nothing else to do now, William. A new, terrible plague has stricken Raton, Abilene, Wichita Falls, and the whole world, and if William thinks it's his duty to be with those who'll be fighting this plague then God will protect him."

"Yes, Mother, but they're saying that God is against war and that a minister becomes anti-God by participating in it. They even quote the Bible to back up their arguments."

"You can read the Scriptures, too, can't you, William?" she said. "Read them, then, and interpret for yourself. God will help you to see what's right, my son."

I must say that God did not take the easiest way to help me see what's right. Just when I would be about ready to apply to the Army, along would come someone to tell me that joining the Army would help destroy the conviction of the Southern Baptist Convention that the Government should not support the Church. "You'd be taking pay from the Government for preaching the Gospel, wouldn't you?"

Professors at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary were just as divided on the question as were the students. The discussions went on in dormitories, classrooms, dining halls, and on the campus.

One day the cartoonist and journalist, Charles Wells, spoke at the seminary, and I was left feeling that perhaps pacifism was the best way after all. It was a pleasant, comfortable feeling, I must admit. But it didn't last long. Charles Wells was followed by Dr. Mills, who told of the time in our history when the bandit with the best six-shooter and quickest draw was the law. Righteous citizens,

however, soon organized a police force to curb the criminals who waged war on society.

I returned to my mission in Wichita Falls still undecided. I would drop in to see Bill Perkins, a deacon of the Lamar Avenue Baptist Church and owner of a local feed store.

"What do you think about my joining the Army as a chaplain, Bill?"

"There's too much talking and too much thinking! It's time to be a-doing. And sure as blazes if we don't stop talking and thinking and start doing it's going to be too late!"

I laid awake that first night of war with my life vest, helmet, flashlight, emergency medical kit, knife, canteen, and pile of Testaments crowded all around me on the narrow bunk thinking of old Bill Perkins and how his simple, straightforward words had shown me God's will.

The clanging bells of "General Quarters" was a welcome sound. I was eager for daybreak. With daybreak would come things to do. Daybreak would bring an end to thinking of the past; an end to worrying about the future.

This was the first of the regular morning drills. We were to have them every morning at four-thirty. At the sound of the bells we were to get out of our bunks and come to our stations on the decks fully prepared for any emergency.

I stood with my group up forward on the portside, searching the darkness for sight of the rest of the convoy. Suddenly the dawn came, as though a curtain had been quickly drawn to let in the light.

Officers were moving between the rows of soldiers examining clothing and seeing if life vests were properly fastened. In the distance I could see the shadowy forms of

the other ships of our convoy coming into sharper focus. I felt pride and confidence in our soldiers and ships. We had come through our first night of war. Our men and ships were together.

Chapter Five

DIVINE TRUTH is brought to the people one by one. This was true in the days of the Twelve Apostles and is more than ever true today.

For men at war years of normal living are compressed into days, hours, perhaps even minutes. It is during these crucial moments that the chaplain serves best. As important as is the weekly Sunday preaching, it cannot be depended upon entirely to solve the soldier's individual problems, big and small.

Rarely, I discovered, does a minister have the opportunity to get as close to his congregation as can a chaplain to men at war. Seemingly unimportant problems, which in normal life would never even come to the clergyman's attention, can seriously affect the soldiers' morale. For men whose every living moment is a preparation for battle, a preparation perhaps for death, the chaplain can become a link to family and home. But the chaplain cannot become that important link to family and home by moving among the men

with folded hands and bowed head quoting Scriptures at the drop of a hat. He must share with the men their day-to-day experiences and enter into them fully. Before he can gain the soldiers' confidence in him as a chaplain, he must gain their confidence and respect in him as a man.

Visiting the men in their quarters below deck became one of my regular duties. Down below in the hold of the ship was my "pastorate," and almost daily I spent as much time there as possible.

Sleeping in the hold of the transport, an area normally reserved for the cargo, was like being entombed in an iron coffin floating beneath the ocean. After Pearl Harbor, portholes and doors that afforded a little ventilation had to be shut. Only a few small blowers forced fresh air into the bays where the men tried to sleep in the unbearable heat. Groups of the men used to alternate sleeping on the decks.

Pipe frames about four feet wide and six feet high were extended in rows with narrow aisles between them. Over these frames pieces of heavy canvas were stretched. These served for beds. From each side of the posts there were three bunks, one on top of the other.

I walked through these narrow aisles chatting with the men.

"Hi, Chaplain," came a greeting from a lower bunk.

"Anything new, Jim?"

"Nope, nothing. Just wondering, Chaplain Bill, why it's always the fellow on the top bunk that gets seasick and pukes," Jim said as he pretended he was avoiding an imaginary spray of vomit coming from the upper bunk.

"Change bunks, why don't you?" I suggested. "You take the top one, let him puke from the lower."

"We just did that," Jim laughed. "Yesterday when I was throwin' up he let me have the lower so he wouldn't get messed up. Now he's messin' me up."

They were making the best of it—joking about a bad situation that couldn't be helped.

"Why so sad, Harry?"

"Aw, this being a soldier on a boat's getting me. This is the second meal I've missed."

"How did it happen?"

"Well, first I came to the mess hall and the sergeant says: 'Where's your life vest? Go back and get it if you want chow!' So back I went for the life vest and stood on line again waitin'. When it comes my turn the sergeant says: 'Where's yer chow ticket? You tryin' to eat twice? Go get yer chow ticket if you wanna eat!' So down I went below again to my bay and found my chow ticket. I climbs upstairs again, and what do y'think? Mess hall's closed!"

"Hungry now?"

"Never been hungrier!"

"Go on up to my cabin, Harry, and you'll find some things there. Help yourself."

The men all around us laughed as Harry lowered himself out of his bunk and proceeded to my cabin.

"Say, Chaplain, do you think we'll lick the Japs before your hair grows back again?"

The clipping of my hair when we crossed the equator the day before Pearl Harbor was a source of much good-natured ribbing. We all shared a good laugh when the navy personnel arranged the impressive initiation into "Neptune's Domain." The men crowded around us as we were having our hair clipped—a part of the initiation into the "Ancient

Order of the Deep." "I didn't know you were a minister." "I didn't know ministers were like us," several of the men said when the fun was over.

"Come 'ere, Chaplain Bill. How d'yu like her?"

"Like who?"

"This—this!" Wally pointed to a drawing attached to his bunk of a girl reclining on a chaise longue, her legs thrown into the air, talking on the telephone.

"When this business is over, Chaplain, I'm gonna get myself a girl who can telephone just like that," he said, laughing.

"That's because he ain't got a wife at home, Chaplain," someone yelled.

"Yeah, and you got a wife at home and you're always looking at the picture anyhow! What do you think of her, Chaplain?"

Before I could answer someone from the top bunk said, "Glad you came, Chaplain. We can't get this guy to see that there's no good in hanging pictures like that around the place."

"Aw, quit yer bellyachin', why doncha? Plenty of you guys look at the picture, doncha?" Wally snapped.

"Mebbe we do. You'd like to eat a good Texas steak instead of the chow we're gettin', wouldn't you? But you don't see me hangin' any pictures of thick, juicy steaks all over the place, do you? If I did, you'd sure look at them, and your mouth would water too. But what good would it do? We'd only get more miserable about the chow we gotta eat."

"Joe's right."

"Yeah, tear it down."

"If we must have pictures let's have some of steaks instead."

The men looked at me. "I think you ought to do what the boys say," I told Wally.

"What's this, a reformatory? What do I have to be—a goody-goody?"

"No, it's just that most of the boys don't like it, so I think you ought to fall in line. I think you'll find you won't miss it."

This was the second time I had seen the soldiers themselves effectively handle the question of pornographic pictures. At camp one soldier had succeeded in shocking his tent mate into seeing his mistake. On his table was a photograph of a naked woman. "Your wife sure is pretty!" the soldier said, examining the lewd picture. The photograph was soon destroyed.

I left my "pastorate" in the hold of the ship feeling that I had done God's work although I hadn't quoted the Scriptures or led anyone in prayer. I saw Bibles on bunks which had been buried at the bottom of bags since the beginning of our voyage. News of Pearl Harbor had brought them out. Several of the men asked me to bring them pocket-size Testaments when I came to their bays again. Two of the men wanted to know if they could join our Bible-study class. I had exchanged jokes and relieved loneliness among some of the men.

I was learning quickly that there are many ways in which God's work can be done.

Chapter Six

"THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY about this Pearl Harbor business, Chaplain Taggart."

The man sitting on my bunk had been troubled about our entering the war. When news of the attack on Pearl Harbor reached us several days before, he had almost immediately expressed his doubts that sufficient efforts had been made to prevent war. He wasn't alone in his beliefs. He was merely more expressive.

"But you heard what the President said, Martin. We were negotiating with the Jap representatives right up to the time of the attack."

"Yeah, but that doesn't prove it to me. Back home they used to say we'd surely get into this foreign mess the way things were going in Washington. And it looks like they were right. We shoulda minded our own business like a lotta people said. I'm a good American. I'll fight for my country. But I don't wanna fight for Europe or any of them other countries. I got a wife and a couple of kids. I don't mind

dying for them if I have to, but I don't wanna do it for a lot of European countries that are always fightin' anyhow."

"Listen, Martin, I think you're all wrong. I volunteered in this army because I felt that sooner or later we'd have to join the fight against Hitlerism. I don't know anything about politics, but I am sure that if the Japs can get away with it in China they'll come over to our own back yard when they think they're strong enough. And when Hitler and Mussolini get finished in Europe and Russia and Africa, they'll get after us. It'll be easy for them then, Martin. We'll be alone. We're here now; we're in the war. I know our leaders tried to keep us out as long as possible, so let's have faith in our leaders and in God."

"Yeah, we're here now and it's no accident. It was all planned. What do you think we've got guns and ammunition and planes all ready for?"

I was glad to hear a knock on the door. I wasn't getting anywhere with Martin. Words could not convince him. It would take time and perhaps some personal experience.

"The doctor asks that you come to the sick bay immediately, sir. There's a man dying."

I rushed out of my cabin. I hadn't thought the boy was in such a critical condition. It looked like a simple case of sunstroke. He had been standing guard in a steel gun emplacement wearing his steel helmet. A tropical sun beat down on him. He was pressed between the heat of the steel helmet and the steel floor. Suddenly everything went black, his knees sagged, and he collapsed, his gun and helmet clanging against the floor.

The boy's face was almost as white as the sheets on the

bed. He lay there still, perspiration pouring from his skin, his eyes open wide, eyeballs still.

I tried to talk to him. The doctor shook his head. Everything possible had been done. Now only time would tell. There was no use trying to talk to him. He was unconscious.

For the first time in the war I was in the presence of death. A soldier was dying in the performance of his duty. One of my congregation was dying. Could it be God's will for this boy to die now, when there was so much for him to do?

I bowed my head and asked the Lord to protect this boy; to give him life so he might continue with the great task before him. "O Lord, if it be Thy will, keep death from this ship. We are on a mission to destroy paganism and barbarianism before they destroy our democracy which, You know, Father, comes from the teachings of Your Son. We are ready to give our lives in this struggle to preserve on earth Your way of life. It's a great struggle that awaits us. All of us will be needed when we meet the enemy. Spare us, then, this man, so he, too, may be able to strike his blow at the enemy. Amen."

When I left his bedside it seemed hopeless. All that day, however, I prayed. I prayed harder than I had ever prayed before. I prayed for his parents, too, who, although unaware of the tragedy that had befallen him, were hopefully looking to God for return of their son. It seemed such a frustration for the boy to die this way. In the privacy of my cabin I talked to the Lord as though He were with me in that very room. That's the way my grandfather used to pray. "The Lord don't need fancy, hifalutin talk," he used to say. "Just talk to Him plain-like and He'll hear you."

In the mess hall, on the decks, wherever I went, whatever I did that day, I continued to hope for that boy's life.

By the end of the day I knew that he would survive. I had a strange conviction that when I returned to the sick bay I would find him past the crisis. The moment I came to his bedside I knew my prayers had been answered. His face, although still pale, had taken on some natural color. His hands moved slightly under the blanket. His body seemed relaxed. His eyes were closed and his breathing came evenly as he slept.

I touched his shoulder lightly and thanked God.

Chapter Seven

I DON'T THINK that I shall ever forget the clanging of those bells. Even now, a year and a half after that day on the Pacific, the mere sight of a dentist's sign brings back clearly the ringing of those bells.

I often wondered if I would know when they were signaling a real attack. That sailor had been right. When the real thing comes you'll feel it, he had said. I knew that day, as the sound of the ship's bells came to me while I was in the dentist's chair, that this was no mere drill. There was a note of alarm about the bells that day that made me quiver.

The dentist whipped the bib off my neck and dashed out of the room to his cabin. I sat there petrified. It was only a moment since the dentist had left, but I felt as if I had been sitting there for hours. I jumped from the chair and walked quickly to my cabin to dress properly for this emergency.

I wanted to get up on deck as soon as possible. I felt trapped in that small cabin. But I mustn't rush. I had better make certain I had everything—knife, flashlight, emergency

medical kit, helmet, canteen, the pocket-size Testaments, Homer's Bible. I might never be able to return to this cabin again. Let's see now—is there room for anything else? I'd better not weigh myself down too much. This life vest might not keep me afloat.

As I walked through the corridors up to the deck, I tugged at my life vest to make sure it was fastened securely while I breathed a prayer that God would protect our convoy.

Only those with definite duties were allowed on deck. Enemy machine-gun bullets or bombs mustn't find it crowded with victims. I was glad that my duties as a chaplain permitted me this much liberty.

The ship was alive with activity. Men were hurrying to their battle stations. Others were at their lifeboat posts testting the pulleys and cables. The large wooden blocks under the lifeboats were removed, the chains unloosed. The motors which would lower the boats were being tested. And now the cranks were being tested in case the motors broke down. The cork life rafts were ready to be tossed overboard for those of us who could not find a place in the boats. The lifeboats couldn't possibly hold the three thousand men on the transport.

Above me on the bridge was the ship's captain, Guy Clark, and his officers peering through binoculars, searching the ocean and sky for the enemy.

Off to the portside the cruiser the U.S.S. *Pensacola* was ready to engage the enemy and draw fire away from us. I looked around and counted each of the seven ships in our convoy following at half-mile intervals. I looked for the subchaser but couldn't find her.

Was it to be a sea battle or would it be a squadron of planes to blast at us with bombs and strafe us with machine-gun bullets? I found myself hoping that it would not be a submarine. I wanted to see the enemy. I wanted to see our bullets and shells rip into their planes and into the sides of their ships.

I remembered the newspaper accounts of seamen who had survived attack. How many of us would come through this? Japanese islands probably surrounded us. Where would we land our boats and rafts? We would just have to stay afloat as long as we could until a friendly vessel came along, or until Jap planes finished us off.

If the orders came to abandon ship I must remember to get down to the sick bay and help put the men into lifeboats. I could hear Captain Clark shouting orders from the bridge. One of our staff officers was on the bridge near Captain Clark, his helmet on his head, a phone transmitter in his hand, and the earphones clapped over his ears. He was talking to his gun crews. He was ready to bark the orders that would send the men into action.

The outline of a ship on the horizon was becoming clearer. From the appearance of its superstructure it began to look more and more like a cruiser. That meant fight. Perhaps it was merely the advance vessel of a powerful Jap fleet. Or maybe this ship was serving as a decoy for planes that would suddenly swoop down out of those fluffy white clouds. I remembered General Barnes's remark about the wily Japs that "if you think you see the Japs coming in one direction, make sure you are ready to fire in the opposite direction."

The gun crews were tense. The men at the lifeboats had

finished testing the pulleys. The rope ladders had been rolled over the sides of the ship. The first-aid station was ready. The officers on the bridge were silent. In a moment we would know. Either all hell would break loose or, if God willed it, we would be safe.

I saw Captain Clark look through his binoculars. He turned to the officers near him and spoke. I saw the officers on the bridge turn and talk to each other. The army officer's grip on the transmitter relaxed. He took off his helmet and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with the back of his hand.

"It's His Majesty's ship, the *Achilles!*" came from the bridge. There was a moment of silence and the voice from the bridge again: "It's His Majesty's ship, the *Achilles,* to join our convoy!" The men cheered wildly. Their cheers swelled louder and louder as the men below deck learned that the danger was over.

As I walked along the deck I caught a glimpse of one of the French 75's still fully manned by the gun crew. I looked at the large gun for a moment and suddenly realized that I had the answer for Martin who was so skeptical about our leaders' attempts to prevent our entry into the war.

I had just removed my life vest when Martin entered my cabin in answer to my call.

"Martin, you saw what happened a few minutes ago, didn't you? It might have been the enemy, you know. If it had been we would have liked to fire those French 75's, wouldn't we? Martin, those French 75's couldn't have been fired. We had no ammunition for them. The ammunition for these French 75's was on one of the other ships. Is that the way leaders do when they know we are going into war?

Do you see now that we were a peacetime army when we left Frisco? We were caught unprepared, Martin, because we weren't preparing for war. Our leaders did want peace. Doesn't this prove it to you?"

Martin looked at me for a long time, then extended his hand and said, "Pray, Chaplain Taggart, that God forgives me for lacking faith."

✠ ✠ ✠

Americans have a way of making the best of everything. Three thousand men trapped on the Pacific Ocean, surrounded by unknown dangers, unprepared for war, not knowing their destination, succeeded in making life on that transport as interesting as possible. With the help of the navy personnel, activities were soon organized to interest everybody. Were it not for the constantly manned gun stations, the men always on watch, and the ever-present life vests, you might have thought this a pleasure cruise. On a main deck hatch we rigged up a ring for boxing. Lieutenant Bernie Leach was the manager of our "Floating Square Garden." He staged the boxing contests with a shrewdness that rivaled even the canny skill of "Uncle" Mike Jacobs to pack New York's Madison Square Garden. Contests were arranged by Lieutenant Leach between the men of the 7th Bombardment Group and the field artillery unit from Texas that had the men buzzing with excitement. Those who could, would come up on deck in the morning to watch the boxers train for the bouts which were usually held in the afternoon.

Often, as I helped arrange these contests, I thought of the harmony between religion and clean, competitive sports.

Standing among the laughing, cheering soldiers I would remember how my father would saddle a horse and ride about twenty miles to play baseball every Saturday afternoon. Next day he would preach. I could see his large-knuckled hand—red, bruised, and split between the fingers from ball playing—come down with a resounding crash on the table to emphasize a point. The strength of that hand seemed to add strength to the point he was making.

The fights were publicized over the ship's communication system, through the ship's mimeographed daily news sheet, and by word of mouth. The deck would be crowded long before fight time. Comedy would be added to the competition as an unexpected wave would make the ship roll and cause a fighter to miss a haymaker; unexpectedly he might land a wild right jab, or lose his footing and fall.

You've got to keep the men busy. If not, rumors will suddenly crop up as if out of nowhere to torment the men.

"Didja hear the news?"

"No, what's happened?"

"They got a news flash at home that our ship's been sunk!"

"Wheredja hear it?"

"I got it straight from upstairs."

No more is said. The men separate. Within a few minutes the rumor has gripped hundreds on the ship. They lie on their bunks looking at snapshots of wives, sweethearts, children, and parents. You see them on deck staring into space. There's less talk at chow time as the men think of the folks at home. If only they could let them know that their ship has not been sunk.

Our radio programs helped considerably to dissipate these

rumors and put the men in a better frame of mind. These programs were produced from the ship's control room and "broadcast" over the communication system. Our "Bomb Cigarette Hour" was a favorite. Music and comedy were interspersed with "commercials" to Tojo recommending "Bomb Cigarettes" to him "in 100, 660, and 2,000 pound packages for relief of throat trouble—for relief of the throat itself."

These were amateurish endeavors, but they kept our men entertained, laughing. Without knowing it, we were using an effective propaganda technique of getting our men to laugh at the enemy.

I would assist in the preparation of the athletic contests and entertainments and they would join me in worshiping or in the Bible-study class. Bible study was held about three times weekly. I looked forward to each of these study periods especially because the idea originated with the men. It was William T. Oglesby, of Riverside, California, and Henry Vierow, of Sacramento, who came to me with the suggestion that we have a Bible-study class. Oglesby, Vierow, Carl Spring, and Nelson Swets would come with their own Bibles and some of the others—among them Glenn Clement, John Wood, Ed Gibson—would bring their Testaments.

"How about leading us in prayer today, Henry?"

We would all bow our heads while Vierow would say: "Father, we are here in this hour of crisis to study Your words and Your laws. For we know that understanding Your words will make it possible for us to do Your work better. Help us, then, to understand Your will. Protect our loved ones at home and guide us all to victory. Amen."

"What shall we study today?"

"How about Romans, Chapter 12?"

"Will you read, brother William?"

He would then read: "'Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another . . . Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; . . . Bless them which persecute you . . . Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that do weep. . . . Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. . . . Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

We would sit in a circle thinking about the words we had just heard, our Bibles and Testaments in our laps and our life vests on the floor beside us.

"It says: 'Recompense to no man evil for evil.' Does that mean we shouldn't be at war?"

"What do you think?" I asked one of the group.

"It also says: 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.' We tried to avoid war as long as we could, like the President said on the radio."

"But the Scriptures say: 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.' Are we going to gain anything by fighting evil with evil?"

"When the Lord wanted David to kill Goliath he made that slingshot into a weapon that did as neat a job as a

machine gun. I guess there came a time when you just couldn't be nice to Goliath any more, huh?"

"Yeah, and that's just what happened with the Japs. You can't be good to them if they go killing our people at Pearl Harbor, can you? You just gotta fight 'em!"

"But how does what it says in Romans, Chapter 12, apply to us now that we are at war?"

"Henry, you suggested that chapter. Do you know the answer?"

"Well, Chaplain Bill, it looks to me like that chapter doesn't just apply to people of the countries we're at war with. It looks to me like there's plenty of meanness among our own people. I think that now we've got to be especially kind to each other just because we're at war."

"Yeah, and how 'bout when the war is over and we've gotten rid of Hirohito and Hitler and Mussolini? We can't do much good by just going on being mean to the people who were fooled into this war. If we do, they'll just remain our enemies."

"Sure, when the war's over, then we can apply what's written in Romans, Chapter 12."

Free men at war remained free. There was no man-made master to tell us what to think; no Gestapo here to report our opinions. No need among us to hide in alleyways to whisper an opinion fearfully. We had questions and asked them unafraid. We were free men of many faiths at war against a common enemy, discussing freely our doubts and exchanging opinions and looking to our Bible for guidance. And through free, independent thinking we saw in the Scriptures the will of God.

Chapter Eight

IT WASN'T until that Sunday after Pearl Harbor in Suva, Fiji Islands, that I really began to understand the full significance of a church building.

You go to church for years, and after a while you don't even notice the appearance of the building. You go to church, and after a while you don't even see the belfry. It's like your home. Not until you're away from it, perhaps never to return, do you begin to understand the meaning of that old rocker. It's like your loved ones. Not until you're away, perhaps never to see them again, do you begin to realize how much they are a part of your very being. It's like the American flag. You see it all through the years in school. You see it flying from flagpoles. And you salute it. But you don't understand its real significance until one day you find yourself fighting for all that this flag has given you.

Word had gotten around with miraculous speed that we would soon sight land. We were on deck every possible moment looking ahead for a sign of the Fiji Islands. Am-

munition and guns distributed on the various ships were to be brought together, the ships were to be refueled, and we would leave perhaps for Australia, but more likely for the Philippine Islands to reinforce General MacArthur's troops.

A few days ago we had heard that the Philippines had been attacked. Maps were spread out on the floor as we studied the best possible route to the embattled soldiers. From the Fiji Islands we would probably try to make a dash across the Coral Sea and through the Torres Strait which separates the Netherland Indies from Australia.

Those who weren't on deck looking for land were busy writing long letters. Surely from Fiji we would be able to send our letters. But the letter writing was brought to a halt when company and squadron officers distributed the printed postal cards. No letters were to be sent. There were printed messages on one side of the card. We were to check the lines we wished, sign our names, and address the cards. Nothing more. We read the messages printed in cold type:

I AM WELL
I HAVE BEEN SICK BUT AM BETTER
I MISS YOU
I HOPE TO WRITE SOON
LOVE TO YOU

Could any of these prepared messages convey to our loved ones our hopes, our feelings, our loneliness? The men looked at the cards and then at the long letters they had written. Disappointment soon gave way to an eagerness to make the most of this opportunity. Letters were put aside

or destroyed, and we began to see in these simple, printed messages personal meaning which I am sure those who prepared them did not anticipate. Carefully we checked those lines that appealed most to us. The signing of our names was important. We must make sure that they recognize our signatures.

The port of Suva slid into view as if by magic. The men crowded the decks toward the bow of the ship pointing and cheering as we moved closer to the first land we had seen since we left Honolulu. Suva rises from the docks and mounts the side of a densely settled and heavily wooded mountain. Crowning the city is the governor's large white mansion surrounded by brilliant tropical flowers.

Two of our ships were docked. We dropped anchor and waited till Sunday morning for our turn to move into the harbor. As our ship was made fast to the dock I saw on the hill the spire of a church. I could see the St. Andrew's cross on top of the building.

"Swell to see a church again, Chaplain."

"Nice if we could have services in that church today, eh, Chaplain Bill?"

I looked at the white church on the hill, and the building became blurred as if enveloped in a mist—more likely because of a tear I couldn't control. As I looked I remembered the white church in Alamorgordo, New Mexico, where my father had been minister. I saw the modest entrance close to the sidewalk. There was no big lawn to separate you from the church. You just stepped off the sidewalk and into the church. I saw the square-topped belfry. Docked at a strange island in the Pacific—an island I don't even remember my teachers ever mentioning—I understood for the first

time in true perspective the impact that the white frame building in a little town in New Mexico had made upon me.

I conducted services that morning for both the officers and the enlisted men. The services were not well attended. There was too much to do. Many of the officers and enlisted men were on the dock, carrying out details assigned to them. My old friend Lieutenant James Tull was at the services. And so was Harry Hamlin, the secretary of the Honolulu Y.M.C.A., whom we fondly called "Honolulu Hamlin."

Excitement broke loose during the enlisted men's service. Since we couldn't come ashore to meet them, the British residents and natives of Suva came to greet us. In a few hours we would be leaving and we might never see land again. They were beginning to play "The Star-Spangled Banner." We were all curious to see what was happening. I cut the service short and we went to the deck railing beside the lounge.

The New Zealand Military Band of the Fiji Battery was playing for us. The big, black-skinned native guards looked as if they had just stepped out of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. They wore red jackets with white webbed belts, and white skirts were wrapped around their shiny waists. They marched barefooted, smiling broadly, their long hair formed into a bushy ball at the backs of their heads.

Later, on the dock, I mingled with the natives and exchanged coins with them. After a while a fine-looking Englishman in spotless whites greeted me. "It's wonderful what the British have been able to do with these native guards. It's a pity, however, that more couldn't be done with them," I said, pointing to the natives behind the high

wire fence that separated the docks from the town. The scalps of the native children crowded against the fence were hairless and covered with scabs. Protruding veins, sores, and scabs on the arms and legs of many of the adult natives could be seen. Many of them seemed emaciated, their eyes diseased, their clothes in tatters. They were an unhappy contrast to the proud, healthy native guards.

"Do you know who you were talking to?" a New Zealand soldier asked when the Englishman was called away. "That was the governor of the Fiji Islands."

I stood on the port side as we pulled out of Suva, listening to the cheering of the natives and watching the hill behind the harbor as it seemed to draw away from us. I stood there leaning on the deck rail, my eyes straining to keep that church on the hill in view as long as possible, then I went to my cabin.

Chapter Nine

LIEUTENANT MILTON KASLOW was our first American soldier to be buried in Australia. I had known Milton at Fort Douglas, Salt Lake City, Utah. His apartment was below mine; our name plates were side by side.

Lieutenant Kaslow was among those busy with the unloading of the ship when we arrived in Brisbane three days before Christmas. Christmas Day found us working harder than ever. Supplies, ammunition, and parts of planes had to be unloaded.

Men who had been confined to the ship for thirty days grumbled a bit when they learned that furlough couldn't be granted. They had tensely awaited action in the Philippines, but when they learned that they were bound for Australia, they began to look forward to getting away from the ship. They wanted to walk on pavement; see automobiles and trolley cars. They wanted to eat in a restaurant or have an ice-cream soda. They wanted a change from the faces they had seen continuously for thirty days. They wanted to see men and women in civilian clothes.

But the men soon got over their disappointment. General MacArthur's troops were fighting desperately against superior forces even on Christmas Day. The Japs were not taking the day off because it was Christmas. We must get those planes assembled without delay and send them into the air against the enemy as quickly as possible.

We had a brief Christmas service early in the morning in one of the sheds that served as our mess hall. We sang some carols, I read the Scripture lesson from the Gospel of Luke, and we remembered our homes as we prayed. It was a lonesome Christmas service. For most of us it was the first Christmas away from home.

As many of us as could get freed from our duties at the ship or at camp went into Brisbane later and attended Christmas services in the Australian churches. Corporal George Barker and Sergeant Ralph Swets, a student of the Moody Bible Institute, joined me at services in the Tabernacle Baptist Church.

I learned of Lieutenant Kaslow's death a few days after Christmas. I rushed to General Headquarters in Brisbane at the request of Captain Roscoe Nichols. Lieutenant Kaslow was injured while assisting in the moving of men and supplies from the Ascot Race Track, where we were temporarily stationed, to Archer and Amberley fields. The reconnaissance car in which Milton was riding crashed into a truck and he was fatally injured. He died the next day at the Amberley Field Hospital.

We laid Milton away in his final resting place on New Year's Day. The thought of burying our first American soldier on the first day of the New Year in a strange country gave us all an eerie feeling.

When the chapel service, conducted by Chaplain Kinney, was concluded, the men of the 8th Matériel—which was attached to a bombardment group—carried the coffin, draped with an American flag, to the funeral car. Milton's body had been placed in a sheet-metal casket first. This soldered metal casket was then put into the hardwood coffin. The metal casket helped preserve the last remains in case Milton's relatives wished to bring his body back after the war.

Officers and enlisted men took their places in the cars behind the funeral coach and we proceeded slowly to the cemetery on the outskirts of Brisbane. The sun beat down on our funeral caravan, but few of us noticed the heat that day. As we passed through the streets of the city the people stopped to watch. They could see the American flag over the casket; they could see the American Army cars. They knew they were witnessing the funeral of an American soldier. An American soldier, who had come to fight the common enemy, was to be buried in Australian soil.

We went to a special section that had been set aside at the far end of the cemetery. The pallbearers lifted the casket from the car and placed it on the planks over the freshly dug grave while the soldiers stood in formation. An Australian clergyman read the committal. I spoke a few words. The American flag draping the casket was removed and folded. The bugler snapped to attention and sounded taps. Lieutenant Kaslow's mortal remains had been laid to rest. As we drove away I saw the acres of ground that had been apparently set aside to hold the bodies of the many more Americans who would have to give their lives.

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I set up "shop" at the Ascot Race Track among the men. Although I knew we would not be stationed here very long, I felt I should be close to them. They were in a strange country, without letters from home, worried about their families. That "where-do-we-go-from-here fever" was beginning to set in. A chaplain can sometimes do a great deal toward keeping that "fever" from soaring dangerously high.

I could have come downtown to the hotel in Brisbane where General Headquarters had been established. Living in town with hotel comforts was enticing after weeks on a transport. But that seemed too far away from my men. When a soldier wants to talk to a chaplain he shouldn't have to seek a pass out of camp. A soldier shouldn't have to take a half-hour trolley ride into town if he wants to see the chaplain. A half-hour is precious to a soldier who may be going into battle any day. If a man wants to pray now, if a man wants to seek God now, it shouldn't be put off until tomorrow. Events move too quickly, death stalks too closely for a chaplain to be away from his men.

So I left my friend Lieutenant Jim Tull and moved into a tent easily accessible to all the men. I made my straw mattress as comfortable as possible and put a lantern on a box. In a corner of the tent I piled up some Testaments and hymnbooks. Sergeant Nelson of headquarters squadron assigned Private George Barker to me as clerk. The transportation officer gave me a jeep. I put the balls, bats, and baseball gloves in a box where the men would see them. I placed the chaplain's flag—a white cross on a blue field—at the entrance, and I was ready for work.

I opened my portable organ and tried to play. All the keys were stuck. Carefully, with the help of some of the

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men, the organ was rebuilt. Many men now dead heard their last music and sang their last hymn while I played this little organ.

Soon my tent became the center for outgoing mail. There was no mail coming from home. Our folks were writing to "PLUM"—which meant the Philippines. It would be weeks, perhaps even months, before mail would reach us—that is if the mail had not been lost. The men would drop their letters into the box near my cot and often stay a few minutes to talk.

"This's the third letter I've written her this week. Don't know if she'll ever get any of 'em. But it's nice writing 'em—it's like talking to her."

I knew how he felt. I had been writing my letters, too, ever since that Sunday when Pearl Harbor was attacked. They weren't really letters. Most of them I didn't even mail. It was just a way of talking to the folks.

"Say, Bob, Chaplain Bill is always sympathizing with us when we get excited about not getting any letters from home. Why don't we give him some sympathy, huh?"

"Have you got a girl you expectin' a letter from, too, Chaplain Bill?"

"I have parents I'd be mighty happy to hear from."

"But how 'bout a girl?"

"Yeh, have yu got a girl?"

"Sure, boys, I have a girl friend."

"So how do you keep from goin' nuts from thinkin' about her and worryin' 'bout her?"

"I'll tell you if you won't kid about it."

"No, Chaplain."

"Honest, we won't."

"Well, boys, I worry, too—plenty. But when I find it's getting tough to bear, I always pray to God, and it relieves me because I know that if He wants to He'll see to it that I get a letter."

"Why doncha pray for us, too, sometime, Chaplain?"

"I do, Bob, all the time."

Bob and his companion left my tent with a "S'long, Chaplain." There had been none of the ribbing I had feared. I know that two months ago at the camp in Salt Lake City I couldn't have said that to boys like Bob and Nick without leaving myself wide open for some wisecrack. That's one of the great differences between peacetime soldiers and men about to go into combat. There is less cynicism; a greater humility. And it's a humility that doesn't soon leave them.

There was no dramatic manifestation of an acceptance of Christianity by Bob. The results of the chaplain's work is rarely ever so spectacular. Bob just used to come to my tent more often—even when he didn't have a letter to leave. He would sit and chat.

"Were you really afraid that day we had the alarm on the *Republic*?"

Bob had met me in the corridor as I was going to the deck. "Why're you so pale, Chaplain? Don't tell me a minister gets scared too!" "Sure I'm scared, just as scared as you are," I had told him. "Yes, Bob," I added, "I really was afraid—afraid not only for myself, but for all the men on our ship and on the others in the convoy."

"But how is it, Chaplain, that you get afraid too? Don't you trust completely in God?"

"Of course I do, Bob. I trust in Him completely. But

there's the danger always of taking the Lord for granted. A little fear now and then makes you humble, makes you realize that it's all in the hands of God. A minister, too, can sometimes begin to take the Lord's work for granted."

Soon Bob was helping me assort the mail or carry the portable organ to the mess hall for services.

We were rapidly becoming conditioned for the hell that was awaiting us on an island in the Southwest Pacific. Men were coming to Australia from the Philippines. They had been ferried back to get the P-40's and A-24's, the fighters and dive bombers we had brought in our convoy. We would all sit around while they told of their encounters with the Japs.

"Just as I was getting ready to climb, the gas tank burst into flames. Guess she was hit by machine-gun bullets. We bailed out in double time. As I was floatin' down I knew that if that Jap didn't get me while I was in the air, I'd better get out of that chute as soon as I hit the water if I wanted to live. So even before I land, I starts working on the straps. I swims under water to the edge of the river and watch the Jap plane dive and machine-gun the parachute. He returned a few times to pepper that chute, as if it was just target practice. I got goose pimples all over. Mebbe it was the cold water, but I don't think so. I think it was those bullets splattering all around where I was supposed to be that made me shiver. . . ."

We said nothing. We just listened. Some of us toyed with our caps and others etched patterns in the ground with

sticks. One of the boys, a tall, blond lad, was carefully drawing the outlines of two hearts, one behind the other.

"The Japs began to drop eggs on our field, so we ran to our planes. A couple of the boys were classmates. They were right near each other. One of them fell. We all laughed. Just then one of them eggs exploded. The guy who fell was not even scratched. His buddy was hit almost squarely. There was hardly anything left for burying. . . ."

The blond lad finished outlining the hearts in the dirt and methodically drew an arrow through both of them.

"It was like a game up there with that Zero, but I'd better not lose this game, I figured. He was cagey, that Jap. I thought I'd never get him. I was beginning to get worried about my gas supply. I was wasting a lot of ammunition too. Finally I managed to get over him. I dived and filled the plane with bullets. The plane was still going along steady, so I went back and pressed the buttons for all I had. I saw the Jap getting ready to bail out. I watched his parachute hit the ground and decided to land and capture him. A captured Jap is better than one that's loose who'd machine-gun us when we're bailin' out. It was tough landing, but I managed it. When I got to the hill where I saw the chute hit the ground, the Philippine Moros had hacked the Jap to pieces with their bolo knives. . . ."

The blond lad kicked dirt over his carefully drawn hearts and started over again.

"Did you run into any chaplains in the Philippines?" I asked the flier.

"Sure I did, and they're all real men, real heroes. Do you know Chaplain Brown? He was right there with the men helping to carry the wounded and dead off Clark Field

and those eggs were exploding all around. But he just kept ferrying up and back in his old jalopy, taking the wounded back to the hospital. It gave me a queer feeling watching him without any weapon taking the same chances as the rest of us. I kinda felt more clearly then what I was fightin' for. It was so that guys like him could have a church for guys like us to come to if we wanted to without anybody ordering us to go to any particular church. . . ."

I had listened to the experiences of the fliers and had been horrified at the brutality of it all, the waste of human life. I thrilled to the successes of our men, but I was somewhat detached from them. These were experiences I would not have. I was here as a non-combatant under the terms of the Geneva convention to which my country was committed.

But now the pilot was talking about Chaplain Ralph Brown, who had come from Seattle, Washington. I wanted to know more about this Methodist chaplain.

"Did you see much of Chaplain Brown before Pearl Harbor?"

"Sure, he used to come all the time. He used to travel over rough roads and tricky jungle trails to get to the different camps on the island. Do you know Chaplain LaFleur of the 19th Bombardment Group? There's a great guy. The day after Pearl Harbor one hundred and fifty planes shower Pampanga for almost two hours with bombs. But cool as a cucumber he goes around among the wounded and dying praying for them and helping to get them out of range and into hospitals, and all the while the field's being strafed. . . ."

I had already heard of Chaplain Joseph F. LaFleur, a Catholic from Abbeville, Louisiana, whom I was destined

to succeed as chaplain of the famous 19th Bombardment Group.

"Yes, those chaplains sure are swell guys," the flier continued. "You know what one of them did? It was just before Christmas and we are all wanting to get a message home. He knows it, so he goes around asking us if we want to send a telegram. Did we want to send a telegram home? Boy, oh, boy! What a Christmas present! So he collects our messages and makes the dangerous trip to Manila to send them out. And you know what? He wouldn't even take any money from us to pay for the telegrams. What a guy!"

A flier who had met the enemy and outwitted him—a hero himself—was talking proudly about the chaplains, calling them heroes. I hoped that my men would have reason to be as proud of me. I hoped that some of them would say about me in the same way: "What a guy!"

Chapter Ten

THAT FIRST SUNDAY in Brisbane turned out to be a busy and eventful day. I conducted a service at the camp which was well attended. I preached to the men, or more accurately I talked to them, and Private George Barker led the singing as I pumped the little organ with my feet.

When the services were finished I asked some of the men who could get away from the camp if they would like to come with me to the Tabernacle Baptist Church where I had been invited to preach.

"Think we'll get some dinner invites, Chaplain?"

"Can't tell; mebbe."

"Did you say a Baptist Church?"

"Yes, the Tabernacle Baptist Church."

"Then are you a Baptist preacher?"

"Sure I'm a Baptist preacher."

"By jiminy cricket, then how's it I didn't know? I've been hearin' you preach ever since we pulled out of Frisco and all the while I've been thinkin' how nice it'd be to be able to

go to a Baptist church. So you're a Baptist preacher? Well I'll be darned!"

I was pleased. I was fulfilling my responsibility to the men. I was not preaching my particular doctrine. I was conducting services suitable for all who wanted to come. I was preaching God's word, and men of various denominations —and some without any denomination—came. And as they listened to my words and prayed with me they thought of their own church and of their own clergyman. Even a member of a Southern Baptist church had come to services for many weeks and had not thought of me as a Baptist preacher.

We piled into the lorry (the Australian word for truck) and drove down the wrong side of the road into Brisbane.

"There go the Yanks," someone on the street called.

The men turned as they heard the word "Yank" and one of them from the deep South particularly sensitive to the word "Yank" said: "The Aussies can call me Yank 'cause they don't know no better, but no American had better call me that."

Everybody laughed. "You still fighting the Civil War?" someone remarked.

"Can you lend me a couple of pounds, Chaplain?"

"Couple of pounds of what?"

"Money! Dollars! Mazuma! I'm goin' nuts with this English money. If we're gonna fight together, why can't we have the same money? You gotta do somethin' 'bout it, Chaplain. I starts the other day with ten pounds in my pocket and I think I got ten dollars. I can't get it through my bean that a pound's worth about three dollars and a quarter. So before I know it the ten pounds is gone and I

think I've spent only ten dollars, but I find I've spent my month's pay. So how 'bout it, can you lend me a couple of pounds, Chaplain?"

"Okay, here's a pound, because you need it, but don't forget it's three dollars and twenty-six cents. So go easy."

Getting accustomed to the English monetary system; getting used to seeing the driving wheel on the right side of the car; learning to distinguish between Australian policemen and soldiers; and driving on the left side of the road were comparatively minor problems.

We were the first American Expeditionary Forces in Australia. Relations between the American troops and the Australians must be good. But unpleasant situations caused by lack of understanding were cropping up all too frequently. From Dunkirk and Crete the Australians returned beaten. Their hospitals were filled with the wounded and crippled. Australians were already mourning the death of many of their men when the American troops arrived. Our cocky, "sure-of-themselves" Americans stepped into a Brisbane that had for some time been feeling the impact of the war. Many foods were scarce. The streets were blacked out. Into this setting came our men, well clothed and with money to spend.

And the Australians who, discouraged by their defeats, looked upon the Americans as saviors, as men who would swiftly turn the tide of battle, didn't help the situation any. Some even expressed the hope that the United States would take over Australia.

Australian soldiers became resentful. They didn't have as much money to spend. Their clothes weren't as trim and smart. And to make matters worse, the Australian girls liked

our American soldiers. They had a way of calling on a girl with a box of candy or flowers. Arguments, even fights, were not rare.

Our truck bounced along the road and suddenly swerved to the left. The chauffeur, not accustomed to driving on the left side of the road, had, without knowing it, gradually worked the truck over to the right.

"What do you think of this, Chaplain? I goes into a restaurant with a gal. She's pretty as a picture! Everything's going along fine except I keep asking the waiter for a napkin and he looks at me dumblike. Finally my girl catches on and tells me it's a 'serviette' I want, and so I tells her I don't care what she calls it so long as I can wipe my mouth. Finally I takes out my money to pay for the feed when a bloke pipes up with: 'You won't beat Hitler and the Japs with dollars, Yank!' as nasty-like as anyone could say it. So I comes back with, 'You didn't do so well in Dunkirk and Crete without our dollars!' So he jumps up mad, and it looks like I'm gonna have a fight on my hands. But I sees he's got an arm missin', so I just leaves the restaurant without a fuss. But I sure was mad!"

Our truck came to a sudden stop in front of the church and we climbed out. The Australians watched us as we filed into the church.

I was one of the first American Army chaplains to preach in an Australian pulpit, and I was thrilled. The church was filled with Australian civilians, soldiers, and sailors. There in the corner was the group of American soldiers who had come with me. They seemed to be looking at me proudly. I felt as I had when I preached my first sermon and Mother and Dad were listening. I was just as nervous as I had been

then. I foolishly called attention to my bald head and explained I was not naturally bald: that my hair had been clipped while we had crossed the equator. A fine way to start preaching! As if they cared anything about my hair! But they smiled at me, and I found it easier to continue. One of my boys winked to me reassuringly. That helped. Most of the boys wore their khakis. Lieutenant Jim Tull was sitting there perspiring in his woolen uniform. His khakis had not been returned from the laundry. Luckily, I had been able to borrow some khakis. I was perspiring enough from nervousness.

I continued with my sermon, and as I talked I tried to hear what I was saying, but the words escaped me. I tried to speak more slowly. I heard the sound of my voice but couldn't distinguish the words. Then I led the Australians and Americans in prayer. We were united in praying as well as in fighting.

The Australians gathered around us at the close of the service asking questions and making friends. How did we like Australia? How long would it take to beat the Japs? What were our "stations" like?

"Our 'stations'? What's that?"

"Stations—where cattle is raised."

"Oh, you mean ranches."

"Yes. Why not come to our home and tell us all about it?"

The questions kept pouring at us. "Is America prepared for war?" "Are American girls as pretty as the girls in the cinema?" "Do you have 'Church Parade' at your camp?"

" 'Church Parade'? What's Church Parade?"

"Church Parade is worship services at Australian camps."

"Oh, I see."

As I left the church with Pastor Butler to go to his home built on stilts, where I would cool off with pawpaw drinks, I kept thinking how much better our international relations would be if more of us could join with people of other countries in church services.

I decided to stop in at the Veterans' Hospital on my way to the home of Mr. Lionel Price, the city engineer. I can't say that I was looking forward to "tea" there. It would take more than tea to satisfy my hunger. But the Prices were charming, hospitable folks, Pastor Butler had said. Maybe, I thought, they would serve sandwiches with the tea.

I found that Captain Joe Crates, a supply officer, was improving rapidly. He had worked too hard, unloading those transports, and was stricken with pneumonia. Joe was getting real service from the nurses, called "sisters" in Australia.

Men who had escaped from Dunkirk and Crete were here too. I moved along wards that would soon hold many of our American soldiers and chatted with the men. There wasn't much you could say to them. They couldn't get their minds off their defeat. There was a bitterness in everything they said; it was apparent in the hard, straight line of their mouths; in the expression in their eyes. It was a bitterness that would be with them as long as the war lasted and perhaps long after. It was a bitterness, I thought, that might be erased only if they could participate in a battle that would inflict a Dunkirk on the enemy. But it didn't look as if many of them would ever be able to fight again.

We sat down at the table for "tea" in the Price home, beautifully located on the bank of the river. Mr. Price told

me of his work as a director of civilian defense of Queensland, the northern part of Australia, of which Brisbane is the capital.

He also asked questions. What were our civilian-defense preparations like? Had we made preparations against air raids? How often did we have air-raid drills?

As he fired his questions at me I wondered who could be handling civilian defense in Wichita Falls, Texas. I was debating with myself whether it was heavy-set J. B. Alfred or lanky, rugged C. H. Foley when "tea" was served; and I learned that "tea" in Australia means a complete evening meal—a very satisfying meal.

Chapter Eleven

By this time the men who had come over with me on the S.S. *Republic* had been dispersed to various camps. We were busy assembling fighter planes and dive bombers which had been brought by truck from the Brisbane docks.

The Australian railroads could not be depended upon to solve our transportation problems. Every state had different gauge tracks. This meant long, slow hauls. Fortunately, the S.S. *President Polk,* which later carried us to Java, brought some transport planes. The mechanics quickly assembled them and soon our pilots were busy flying the transports. These men worked hard and flew long hours with little rest delivering great quantities of precious supplies and personnel. They flew through danger zones unarmed, with some fighter protection only when they neared their destination. The names of these men—Lieutenants Henry, Moore, Wise, McCollough, Petchell, Whitaker, and many others, belong on the honor roll of combat heroes.

The "Flying Coffins," or B-18's, were among the other

planes we used at Amberley. Lieutenant Whitaker came by to see me one morning before he was to fly one of these B-18's.

We walked to his plane together.

"What's on your mind, Whit?"

Whitaker hesitated and then pulled out a photograph of a girl. "Take this, Bill. Her name and address are on the back. If I don't get back write to her for me, please."

It was a picture of his sweetheart in Dallas, Texas. I felt a shiver run through my body as I watched Whitaker prepare to take off. Whit probably lacked confidence in the old, slow ship. I remembered how we had lost Captain Frank Nelson of Salt Lake City, "the million-miler air-line pilot," in a crash near San Francisco. It was in a plane like this. I remembered Whit's mother whom I had met in San Francisco just before we left. She smiled shyly when we told her that Whit was the handsomest fellow in our group.

All through those weeks in Java I carried this picture of another man's girl friend in my wallet. I wondered if Whit had gotten out all right when I returned to Australia. I wasn't going to write to his girl until I was absolutely sure. I thought I'd check at air corps headquarters and later get around to the hospitals.

One day in March, as I was leaving army headquarters in Perth, Australia, I saw Whit chatting with a group of officers.

It was a simple, matter-of-fact reunion.

"Glad to see you, Bill."

"Glad to see you, Whit."

"So you got away from the Japs all right, Chaplain?"

"What would the Japs want with a chaplain anyhow!"

"Sure, there's no Christianity in those——! By the way, Chaplain, I hope you didn't write to her."

"No, Whit, I still have the picture," I said as I began to take it out of my wallet.

"That's good, Bill. That's very good. It would've been terrible if you'd written."

"Why, Whit?"

Whit carefully tore the picture in half. Then he placed the two halves together and tore them. Then he took the four pieces and placed them together and tore those, and let them fall to the ground like confetti.

"Why, Whit?"

"She married another guy soon after we left Frisco."

Lieutenant Howard Petchell met me near the wooden peaked-roof "hut" which was divided into two chapels, one for the Catholics and the other for the Protestants.

"Your chin's resting on your chest, Pet. What're you so blue for?"

"I dunno, Chaplain. I just don't feel like I'll ever get to see Kathleen or my baby."

Petchell, a Catholic, had said this to me before. The first time was on the S.S. *Republic,* shortly after Pearl Harbor. We had been talking about Chaplain Joseph Vanderheiden, whom we had both known in Salt Lake City.

"I gotta funny feelin' inside. I feel like I'm never gonna get back to Minneapolis to see my wife and baby. I just feel sure I'm not gonna live through this."

"You've got to stop this kind of talk, Petchell. The Lord'll look after us all, just as He always has. Just make up your mind that you will come out of it all right and that

you're going to see that wife and baby of yours and you will. Just have faith, Petchell."

As I talked to him in my cabin that day I could see his wife, a pretty young girl, standing at the gymnasium door in Salt Lake City, watching us play basketball. I thought at first she was one of the local high-school girls who were not permitted on the premises while we were there.

"Schoolgirls are not allowed here," I told her.

"I'm not a schoolgirl. I'm Howard's wife!"

"Whose wife?"

"Lieutenant Howard Petchell."

Now, at Amberley Field, Petchell was again talking about his feeling that he wouldn't return to the United States. Within a few weeks his premonition became reality. He was about to take off at night with a transport from Broome, Australia. His plane crashed into some empty gas drums on the ground before he could get into the air. Since the necessary repairs would keep him grounded several days, he decided to fly into Perth with Lieutenant William P. Ragsdale, of Spokane, Washington, and about thirty other men. Before the landing gear was completely retracted a flight of Jap fighters and bombers suddenly appeared and shot the plane out of the air. A quantity of Dutch flying boats and American planes were destroyed during that raid on March 3, 1942. Thirty-two hours later Sergeant Donoho, the only survivor, managed to swim to shore.

"All I remember is an explosion and I was blown out of the bomb bay into the water."

Lieutenant Howard Petchell was dead. He wouldn't return to Minneapolis. He wouldn't see his wife and baby. I was glad that Howard had come to me with his premoni-

tion. Perhaps through our meetings he was better prepared to meet his Maker.

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Out on the line the men could be heard working on the fighter planes as we held our service in the hut. Not many came. Nine o'clock in the morning, I found, was a bad hour for services. By that time most of the men were either on duty or had already left the field. I learned from Padre Norman F. Reeve, a chaplain of the Royal Australian Air Force, that six o'clock was the best time. But we had a good service for the few who came. With a smaller group you can sometimes get closer to the men. It was an informal service. It wasn't conducted. We all participated. I played the little organ as George led the singing. Then we just sat around and talked about religion. Often we had to stop talking until the noise of the airplane motors subsided.

After services George and I went to the field hospital with the portable organ and some hymnbooks. The sisters welcomed the idea of a service for the Americans and Australians.

George passed out the hymnbooks to the men in bed and to those sitting around in wheel chairs while I opened my organ. We sang hymns selected by the patients. When the singing was finished I spoke to them briefly and then read a poem from a collection my mother had sent me.

We carried our hymnbooks and organ from ward to ward, repeating the services, stopping to comfort the patients, pausing beside some of the beds for a brief word of prayer.

"Thank you, Padre Reeve," one of the Australian patients

said to me. He was too ill to know that I was not the Australian Air Force chaplain.

In the brief time that I knew Padre Reeve—all chaplains in Australia are called "padre"—I learned a great deal from him about the work of a chaplain. There was a Christlike quality about this simple, unaffected preacher as he went among his men, wearing his comical shorts and long wool stockings. He was welcome wherever he went. He moved among the men in the barracks, in the hangars, bringing the Gospel with him always. It wasn't anything he had learned or acquired. You felt that it was a part of him, like his shy, frank smile. Daily Padre Reeve could be seen bouncing along the road in his little English car visiting his men.

He used to gather the boys in the chapel, which he shared with the Catholic chaplain, for a prayer meeting and social period. He would read the first stanza of the hymn after the organ introduction had been played. Then the men would rise and sing. In Australia they always stand to sing hymns.

At one of these prayer meetings Padre Reeve asked me to speak to his men. What could I possibly have to say to these men? I wanted, rather, to hear from them. They had been at war for some time. Some of them had seen action. I wanted a message from them. What happens to religion in war? Do men forget in the heat of battle?

One big Australian sergeant stood up to give me the answer. He had been at Crete.

"Ever since the war started I've been praying for victory. I prayed for victory all through the battle in Crete . . ."

The roar of an engine drowned out his words. All heads

were turned in his direction as he stood in the small room, his sun-bronzed face illumined by the small electric bulb dangling from the ceiling.

". . . I prayed all through the fighting and through the retreat from Crete. When I got back home I continued to pray for victory. I know my prayers have been answered. Now I know we're going to win the war."

There was nothing you could say to that. In the midst of tragic defeat he had faith and had continued to pray. And now he knew his prayers would be answered.

Here, I thought, was the essential difference between our Allied soldiers and the Axis. Our enemy had only the machinery of war in which to have faith. And when that was smashed, what was left? We had the "weapon" that no amount of bombardment could break down. Through adversity, through bitter defeat, our faith in Him only grew stronger. In the conquered countries and even within the gates of our enemies' lands this "weapon" was being secretly used by the enslaved people. No Gestapo could stop it. When the churches were closed, they just worshiped in their homes. When their homes were taken from them, they moved along the roads with the few belongings left to them, never losing faith. When their Bibles were burned, they prayed in their own words. Yes, this was the "weapon" historians would have to concede turned the tide to victory.

"Captain Nichols wants you to phone him immediately," Private Barker informed me soon after I had returned from the chapel. I phoned General Headquarters from Flight Surgeon Captain Louis Halpern's quarters.

"The men are moving north, Bill."

"Action?"

"No doubt."

"I ought to be with them, Roscoe. There're plenty of chaplains here."

"You don't have to convince me, Bill. That's why I called you."

"You coming, Roscoe?"

"No, not yet. The 11th and 22d's moving now. We'll follow later—in about a week."

"When do we leave?"

"Pack immediately and stand by."

Chapter Twelve

I HAD become quite proficient at packing. Although I had been in Australia only about three weeks, I had moved about from camp to camp a good deal.

My clerk, George, was there helping me pack the portable organ, the hymnbooks, and the Testaments. My chaplain's flag was carefully folded and placed in a bag near Homer Reynolds' Bible. George and I finally agreed that I should take the dozen books I had collected which constituted our library.

We piled the bags and boxes into the truck and drove to the Brisbane docks. The twenty-eight-mile drive seemed to take only a few minutes. There was so much to say to George Barker and Honolulu Hamlin who accompanied me. George was depressed because he wasn't coming with me. He was to follow with the rest of the group. Honolulu chatted all the way in like a father who is taking his son to the dentist to have his first tooth pulled. George was to be sure to get the group's mail to headquarters censor. And

you'll write to my folks, won't you, George? Mustn't forget to stop at Ascot. Jim Tull was there. And I must say good-by to Jim and the men of headquarters squadron.

At the docks the men were busy loading the S.S. *President Polk* with trucks, gas, cars, jeeps, ammunition, and food. Captain Nichols was there to give us final orders and say good-by.

"I'll be seeing you later, Bill."

"See you soon, Roscoe."

Yes, if the ship got through, I thought.

Lieutenant Elliott Airmet, an engineering officer from Salt Lake City, and Robert Rankin, a pilot, were my cabin mates. Across the hall were Captain Earle Hicks, Lieutenant Jack Dodd, and Lieutenant Nicholas Saliba, a doctor. Near us in another cabin was Lieutenant Commander Corydon Wassell, a navy doctor from Arkansas, whose work later with the wounded of the *Marblehead* was to be praised by President Roosevelt.

In our convoy was the cruiser S.S. *Houston,* three World War I destroyers, or "tin cans" as we called them, a tanker, *The Pecos,* and one freighter. It was not a large convoy, but it was most important that we get through, since we had food and a considerable quantity of torpedoes, bombs, gas and oil, as well as vital personnel aboard.

I was now a veteran of convoy sailing. I took my ship drills with nonchalance. I really enjoyed the comforts of the *President Polk.* The liner had been floated on Sunday, December 7, at San Francisco. It was called back after the attack on Pearl Harbor and taken over by the Army. The luxurious interiors had been left intact. Only the outside of

the ship was painted a dull gray. An army gun crew manned the vessel against attack.

About the sixth day out of Brisbane seven sharp blasts pierced the air. It was the signal to prepare to abandon ship. There was no mistaking that signal. It wasn't the "General Quarters" alarm—that continuous blast that rushed you to your quarters to await the dreaded seven blasts that meant it's time to prepare to abandon the ship. They must have sighted the enemy. No time for preparations. There was no sound of airplanes. Maybe I couldn't hear it because of my excitement. Maybe it's a submarine.

The executive officer of the ship, to whom I had been talking, grabbed his life vest and I mine and we walked swiftly to the deck. By the time I got to my boat station on the main deck the ship was moving through the water full speed ahead, like an animal that had suddenly sensed danger.

From the starboard side I saw the S.S. *Houston* turning into proper position to catapult her two planes into the air with the wind. The destroyers were spinning around in large circles. The tanker and freighter were swiftly moving away from our portside.

It was a submarine. The captain of the ship had been looking out on the ocean off our starboard side when he noticed that "question mark"—the Jap submarine periscope is shaped like an interrogation point—sticking out of the water. The two planes were climbing and circling. After a few minutes their circles became smaller and smaller as they sighted the sub. The destroyers turned and went back to the position probably radioed by the planes. Soon the depth charges exploded, shooting sprays of water into the

air like great fountains. If we didn't sink the sub (the navy men later told me they thought they did) we certainly did scare it away.

"Chow! Chow! Come and get it!" The portly second steward of the ship walked along the deck ringing his large bell. "Chow! Chow! Come and get it! It may be your last!"

On the heels of possible tragedy we laughed even at a grim thought like that.

Our service that Sunday was a rejoicing and thanksgiving that we had been delivered safely from the Jap submarine. This was the first service to be held on the *President Polk*. Cots were moved back in the beautiful lounge to make room for all the officers and enlisted men who came.

From the mast my army chaplain's flag was flying above the Stars and Stripes. It was Dr. Wasssell who had suggested to me that the church flag be hoisted on the ship's mast. This was regular procedure in the Navy, the ship's captain informed me, and he was pleased to comply with Dr. Wassell's suggestion.

From the mast of the S.S. *Houston* I could see the triangular navy church flag flying above the American flag. They, too, were having their church call.

We were relieved when we passed through the Bali straits and entered the Java Sea. We stood on the deck and saw land on either side. The channel separating Bali from Java is so narrow that only one vessel can go through at a time. The sinking of one of our ships might have blocked that passageway.

Near the little island just out from Surabaya we saw our first Javanese natives, sailing their shallow little fishing boats drawn by matted sails.

As we pulled into the well-equipped busy harbor we saw ships and submarines of the United States Asiatic Fleet taking on supplies. The gangplank was raised from the dock and someone pointed excitedly to the dock, calling: "There's Major Hobson! There's Major Hobson!"

Seeing Major Kenneth Hobson and the other officers on the dock made us feel as if we had come home. We had all been anxious about our plane crews, the pilots, copilots, navigators, bombardiers, engineers, radio operators, and gunners.

One reconnaissance squadron, commanded by Colonel Richard H. Carmichael, had left Hamilton Field, San Francisco, on December 6, 1941, the officers told us. The planes arrived in the vicinity of Hickam Field on the following day at the height of the initial Jap attack. They just landed their planes wherever they could—on golf courses, on the beaches, just anywhere possible.

"As we get near Hickam," one of the survivors said to me, "one doctor in the nose of the plane is sitting there calmly taking pictures of the fireworks. He thinks it's just a lot of artillery practice. Pretty soon the medic taking the pictures says: 'This looks like a real battle—looks like real war to me; I'd better git.' A few seconds later he slumps over in his seat dead. A bullet got him."

Since the officers sleeping in my cabin were both leaving the ship immediately I asked Major Hobson to stay in my cabin while he was in town. In our cabin that evening we talked about what we were to face in Java.

"Taggart, it won't be long till we'll be attacked. Every time we fly a mission out of here the Japs trail us back a little closer. They want to see where we're basing our planes."

As I listened, I realized the seriousness of the situation. Slender, light-complexioned Hobson was not given to much talking. Apparently he had been thinking a good deal about it all for the words just poured from him.

"What have you been doing about maintenance?" I asked.

"The field artillery boys have been helping out all they can. They're at Singassari. The crews, however, have had to do their own work a great deal. When they're not flying the planes they're busy working on 'em. After a mission those who get back clean their own guns, refuel their own planes, patch up and work on the engines. We're mighty glad to see those old line chiefs and their crews coming in."

"How about the landing fields?"

"Terrible! Terrible! We use grass fields. Last Sunday I was leading a flight of three. On the return we hit heavy rains. Not a field on the island was open. It was hopeless, so I radioed them to crash-land. One landed in a rice paddy, the other on a beach, and I set mine down on an athletic field."

I drove into Surabaya that evening in a taxi. It was a noisy two-wheeled cart drawn by a pony. The barefooted driver, sitting in front of me, wore a colorful sarong wrapped around his waist which hung almost to his ankles. A shirt and a cloth cap which looked like a butterfly completed his costume.

The streets were filled with Javanese and Dutch soldiers.

Little British and Italian cars careened through the narrow streets with a seeming disregard for the safety of the pedestrians or the little wooden carts that served for taxis. Along the road I saw the native stands where food was prepared on charcoal burners.

Near the market place I had dinner with an American Air Force captain whose wife was still in the Philippines. Two planes had been shot from under him. After that he was sent to Java to do some organization work. "We'll be soon back in the Philippines," he kept assuring me. He hadn't seen his wife since Pearl Harbor.

After a nine-course dinner I returned to the ship. In the morning I asked Major Hobson how I'd be able to get around to the men scattered throughout the island.

"You'll have a lot of territory to cover, Bill. But planes'll be going back and forth all the time. I think you'll be able to get around to the boys all right."

"Where shall I go first?"

"I think you had better go to Djokjakarta. Send your things on by train and you'll come in with the car."

Before I left for Djokjakarta I wanted to get into Surabaya again to buy some supplies for our men. In a bookstore I met a navy chaplain, probably from the S.S. *Houston*, who, with the help of a sailor, was carting off about seventy dollars' worth of books he had purchased. After buying mine I went shopping for a "crash tag." I thought I'd better have one since I'd be flying a good deal. Often a body can be burned beyond identification.

The Dutch proprietor of a bakery shop offered to help me get my crash tag. He took me to the Chinese section of the town. There a Chinese metalworker agreed to make the

bracelet. I paid him in advance, and he was to deliver it to my Dutch friend.

The Dutch shopkeeper then insisted that I accompany him to his home for refreshments. The house was furnished in oriental fashion with carved hardwood and bamboo furniture. He showed me the huge bed under which he crawled with his wife and daughter when the Japs raided the port.

My host struck a little hammer against the gong suspended on a frame and as if by magic a servant appeared. In a few moments the servant returned noiselessly with a large assortment of tropical fruit. My Dutch friend told me the names of the various delicacies and assured me they were very refreshing. I ate them, but frankly I would have preferred an ice-cream soda.

I was supposed to pick up my crash tag at my Dutch friend's house. However, I had to leave Surabaya sooner than I had expected. I'll have to get that bracelet on the return trip to Java, when we drive the Japs into the sea and free our Texas "Lost Battalion."

Chapter Thirteen

THE CONVOY of one staff car, two ambulances, and several half-ton trucks was almost ready for the 260-mile trip across the island to Djokjakarta.

I had never organized a motor convoy. The thought of leading one had never occurred to me, but the men and supplies had to get through and a line officer for the job was not available. Since I was going to Djokjakarta anyhow, why didn't I look after things? Major Hobson and Lieutenant Jack Dodd asked.

I stood near the staff car at the docks of Surabaya watching the oxen as they pulled the clumsy two-wheeled wagons loaded with sugar cane. A few feet in front of me the Dutch Army sergeant and his driver were standing near their motorcycle to guide us to our base. Brown-skinned, sweating little natives were all around. Some were selling rice food or trinkets while others just sprawled in the shade to escape the hot midday sun.

I was enjoying the jabber of the native hawkers when a

soldier rushed up to me breathlessly. "Sir, Major Robinson was shot down!"

"Which Robinson? Not our C.O., Stanley Robinson!"

"Yes sir. It happened this morning."

"Positive?"

"Yes sir. Captain DuFrane was in the flight with Major Robinson. He said the plane crashed into the water and exploded."

"Anybody saved?"

"No sir. All gone."

I slumped into the seat of the car when the soldier left. Just a few weeks ago Robinson was at the docks in San Francisco as we boarded the S.S. *Republic*. "I'd fly you over, Taggart, but these men'll need you. You've got a big job. Take good care of our boys. I want you to tell me all about your trip, Taggart, when we meet over there." I was on my way to tell him all about it. And now he was dead.

All in that plane were dead: Captain Walter W. Sparks, Jr., from Inverness, Mississippi; Lieutenant William T. Biggers from Chester, Mississippi; Lieutenant Richard W. Cease from Trucksville, Pennsylvania; Lieutenant Jack T. Laughlin from Del Rio, Texas; Staff Sergeant J. Gordon Drake from Boise, Idaho; Corporal Cecil R. Hammon from Dewey, Oklahoma; Private First Class Lloyd H. Torell from Kenneth Falls, Oregon.

As our cars and trucks moved slowly out of Surabaya I could hear above the hum of the motor and the singing of the wheels the thin, proud voice of seven-year-old Stanley K. Robinson, Jr.: "My daddy is the commanding officer and Chaplain Taggart is his chaplain."

Young Stanley pronounced every word precisely. Every

syllable of that sentence was so important to him when I heard him say it in Salt Lake City.

There was so much young Stanley wanted his daddy to teach him. "Will you teach me to shoot a pistol like you can, Daddy?" That was at the Organization Day picnic of the 9th Squadron. "Will you teach me to fly, Daddy? Will you . . ."

At the outskirts of Surabaya we stopped the convoy and gathered around our Javanese guide to tell him how fast we wanted to go. That wasn't as easy as it sounds. The words "forty miles an hour" didn't mean a thing to him. The native would let loose a torrent of Javanese words at me and then throw up his hands in a gesture of defeat when he realized that I didn't understand him. Finally I pointed to the "40" on the speedometer. He smiled and climbed into the sidecar of his motorcycle, chattering to his driver and pointing to the number.

But we were moving too slowly. This would never do. We stopped again. I talked in pidgin English; I made signs on the ground. The air was filled with Javanese and English. I pointed again to the 40 on the speedometer. He nodded, pleased. He pointed to the number also. Everything was all right now. Into the sidecar he stepped, and we were on our way again. But he continued to move along at about half the speed we desired.

"Maybe there's a law here against driving more than twenty miles an hour," someone suggested.

We couldn't drive so slowly. At this speed we would be at least twelve hours behind schedule. I stopped the convoy again to endeavor to make the guide understand. We were

about to start wrangling again when one of our men started laughing.

"The joke's on us, Chaplain!"

It didn't look like much of a joke to me. Both the guide and I were getting exasperated at our inability to understand each other.

"What's the joke?"

"His speedometer is in kilometers and ours is in miles. A kilometer is a little more than half a mile."

We all laughed, and the guide laughed even more heartily than we, although I'm sure he didn't know what we were laughing about. I pointed to the "70" on his speedometer and we proceeded.

We drove through narrow paved roads with the jungle all around us. Monkeys stopped to look at us and then swung playfully through the trees. Brilliantly colored parrots darted across the road. We passed acres of tall sugar-cane stalks; hills terraced with rice paddies that looked like swamps that had been planned; and neatly planted rows of tapioca.

Late in the afternoon natives crawled up the trees and gave us coconuts to quench our thirst. We drank the cool milk and ate the coconut meat while we watched the native women vigorously beating their laundry clean with a rock near the stream.

We drove without any lights. The Dutch officer at the Madoen Naval Training Base had warned me that the soldiers had instructions to shoot first and ask questions later if they saw vehicles with lights.

We experienced none but the usual problems that beset a motor convoy. They were problems that had me on edge, however, since it was my responsibility to see the convoy

through. Every man, every bit of supplies would count on that island. I didn't want any avoidable accident to rob our group of its strength.

At about one o'clock in the morning I heard the horn of a truck signaling.

"We lost our gas truck, sir."

The trucks and ambulances stopped while I went back in the staff car to find the missing truck. I located it several miles back stalled at the side of the road.

"Engine trouble—she won't start."

We tinkered with the motor without results, and then I thought perhaps it needed gas. We poured some into the tank and the motor turned over. The gas truck had been out of gas.

We passed an airfield at about two-thirty in the morning. The outlines of the hangars were visible in the moonlight. After a few minutes we passed under two street lights, made a sharp left turn, and we were in Djokjakarta.

By the time I returned from the Dutch military headquarters, where I had received permission to continue to our post, the men in the cars were dozing. I roused them and we drove through the town until suddenly I saw some G.I. trunks on a lawn and I knew we had reached our destination.

In the barracks was a row of cots with mosquito netting stretched over them across bamboo poles. My flashlight caught the name, "Sergeant William Prince" lettered on a flight bag near one of the cots. I hadn't seen Sergeant Prince since last November in Salt Lake City. I shook him rather violently. It took several minutes before he was sufficiently awake to recognize me.

"Well! Well! Hello, Chaplain Taggart. Sure glad to see you. How are you?"

"Fine. And you?"

"O.K. I've been flying some combat and she's pretty hard."

"We'll talk later, huh? Let's get these men some beds at once."

Prince took me to Major Earle Hicks.

"We were getting worried about you boys."

"How are things, Earle?"

"Pretty bad, Bill. It was a shock to lose Robinson."

"When's Duke coming?" I wanted to hear from Captain John L. "Duke" DuFrane about Major Robinson's last flight.

"He may be here in a couple of days. Come on up here, Bill, and use Major Straubel's bed. He's gone to take over Robinson's job."

Before I had slept on that bed four nights Major Straubel was dead too.

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I was up early the next morning. I wanted to get my equipment unpacked, organize my office, and find a place for services. I wanted also to meet the crews that had flown in from the United States.

In the north end of our barracks I set up my office. I brought in my portable organ and unpacked the hymnbooks and Testaments. I thumbed through a few of the books the wives of officers had given us and found the name "Mrs. Stanley Robinson" on the flyleaf of one of the books.

At the end of the H-shaped building was a small chapel.

"Just the thing for you, Chaplain," someone said.

"No, too small. I think we'll use the mess hall."

"I'm Lieutenant Robert Trenkle. Welcome." He extended his hand.

"I'm Chaplain Taggart. Pilot?"

"Oh no, just one of those navigators."

I liked Trenkle immediately. I liked his frank, pleasant manner. There was a sturdy confidence about him. He never seemed to fear the results of a mission.

"When I'm in combat," he told me later, "I just call on God to look after me. There's nothing more for me to worry about. All I have to do from then on is just do my job. If He wants me to come back, He'll get me through."

I walked to the orderly room with Captain Charles A. Stafford, of Hinsdale, Illinois, the flight surgeon of the 9th Squadron whom I had known rather well at Fort Douglas. "You'll like it here all right," he assured me. "It's lots better than what our boys have in Malang."

Major Hicks came into the orderly room while I was talking to Sergeant Alexander of the 11th Squadron and watching Sergeant Hollis Cox playing with the parrot he had acquired in Surabaya. Since we had so few officers he wanted me to serve as billeting officer in addition to my duties as chaplain.

Major Hicks and I drove to the airfield about three miles from the barracks. It was a reclaimed rice field which we shared with the Dutch. There were no paved runways. I left Major Hicks in the operations room and drove around the field to the various hangars. The men seemed so tired, so desperately in need of relief as they worked on the planes many of which showed gaping bullet holes.

Java was a great improvement on Australia, where we

had received no mail and hadn't been permitted to cable or telephone. The men beamed when they learned they could telephone to the United States.

"This war ain't bad at all," one of the boys remarked. "Heck, it's like fightin' in your own back yard. You return from a mission, you pick up the receiver and say you wanna speak to your wife. In a little while she's there talking to you. 'Did you have a hard day at the office, dear?' she says. 'Now hurry home, 'cause dinner is almost ready.'"

I thought often of telephoning my parents, but I was afraid that the shock might be too great. I considered calling a girl friend in Salt Lake City or Flip Hoskins in Wichita Falls to ask them to contact my parents. But somehow I never did. Too quickly I became involved in so much tragedy that caused me to forget to satisfy my own desires.

Lieutenant Bernice Barr telephoned his wife, Doris, one day.

"Well, has the baby come?" I asked, after the call was over.

"No," he said pathetically in his Mississippi drawl. "What'm I gonna do, Preacher? My baby hasn't come yet!"

"There ain't nothin' he can do, Barr, he ain't the stork," someone kidded him.

"Hope it's a girl, Chaplain, wouldn't want my child to have to go through any of this ever."

"Say, that's no protection. They'll probably have the women fightin' the next war."

"Yeah, that'll really be the war to end all wars!"

"Well, let's work and pray that this'll be the last time," I put in.

"Amen!" someone said.

Sunday morning I held services in one of the larger rooms at the barracks for the combat crews. The men came in khakis, some with their forty-five automatics slung on their hips. The service was well attended, partly because it was held at eleven o'clock just before chow time. I think also that the boys might have wanted to have a look at their new chaplain in action.

Sergeant Edward Christenson led the singing. The portable organ didn't behave too well in its Java debut. Some of the keys stuck and at times Christenson didn't know what note to expect next. But the spirited singing carried it along.

In the evening I held another service at the school a short distance away, where the ground crews were quartered. We worshiped in the large mess hall, which had been the school's gymnasium. We sang hymns, we prayed, and I talked awhile to the men. A few Javanese native boys sat at the back of the room listening intently. From time to time they would look at the Testaments or hymnbooks. After the service I bought some refreshments for the men and we sat around exchanging stories.

Chapter Fourteen

THE SERGEANT put the receiver back carefully on the hook. "The Japs have attacked the island."

He said it calmly, but it wasn't the calmness of resignation. It was different from the calmness of the British officer who had come to the school a few days ago to take the English beds away because he thought we would soon have to evacuate the island.

"Does the 'V' stand for vacuation?" someone had jibed.

The Japs had hit Surabaya and Singassari. None of our men at Singassari had been killed on the ground. The harbor of Surabaya had been badly battered and the streets had been strafed. Many had been killed. I hoped that the large bed had protected the Dutch bakery-shop proprietor and his family.

Soon the telephone rang again. The sergeant picked up the receiver. It was for Major Hicks.

"Major Straubel has been shot down near Surabaya." He held the receiver in his hand; his face was pale. "Major

Straubel and Lieutenant Russell Smith got away from the plane safely after the crash, but they went back to try to get the others out. They were badly burned."

"How bad is it, Major?"

"Hospital says Straubel and Smith may pull through."

"The others gone?"

"Yes. You'll come with me to Surabaya, Bill. You may be needed."

We called the airfield. But our little courier plane, flown usually by Lieutenant Robert Rankin, had been grounded. It was not considered safe to fly. It had no speed or protection. Driving to Surabaya would take us away from the base too long.

The next morning I rushed to the orderly room to see if there was any news. I knew what it was as I entered the room.

"They're both dead. They died last night."

"I should've tried to get to them, Japs or no Japs," Major Hicks said.

About the middle of the week Duke and some of the other boys flew in from Singassari. They were going to be stationed at our base. Lieutenant Richard Negley, of San Antonio, the West Point graduate, was unpacking his things. There was Sergeant Louis Keightley, of Sioux City, with whom I had gone to services in Salt Lake City at the First Methodist Church. Neat, orderly Bill Morgan, of Binghamton, New York, was stretched out on the cot. There was Captain Donald Strother of Denver bending over his flight bag, probably looking for the picture of Eleanor and his son, Toby. And there were Lieutenant Samuel Patillo, of Dennison, Texas; Lieutenant William

Pritchard, of Augusta, Georgia; and Lieutenant Fergus Luscombe of Dalhart, Texas, who had so proudly told me his parents were good Christians.

Lieutenant Willis W. Burney, of Artesia Wells, Texas, was here too. Just before I left Salt Lake City I had married Burney. He and his bride hadn't been quite sure that marrying was the right thing with war so close.

"Think you did the wise thing marrying, Burney?"

"You bet. Wouldn't have it any other way."

"Did you phone her yet?"

"Going to soon."

I called Lieutenant Duke DuFrane aside.

"What about Major Robinson? How did it happen?"

I could see Duke didn't feel like talking about it, but I persisted. "Robby was commanding from the lead ship. We were to drop our bombs after the bombardier in Robby's plane let loose on the target. The bombs failed to drop from Robby's plane, so we all went over the target on a dry run, but we met no enemy fire. When we returned we were met by Jap Zeros. Robby's ship was hit and damaged. He called me to take command, and his ship fell back. We dropped our bombs and headed back to the base. Robby's ship kept falling back. I tried to stay to protect him. I pulled the throttle back as far as I could without stalling. Robby kept losing speed. Soon he radioed that he was going to crash-land on the island. The plane banked for a turn, but he fell off the bank and crashed into the sea. My gunner said the plane exploded and flames leaped high into the air when she crashed. By the time we had circled and returned everything was quiet where Robby's plane had fallen."

"How come Bill Morgan wasn't with Robby in the plane?"

"Robby shouldn't have been in that plane either. His plane was grounded for repairs, but he can't wait till it's fixed. They're all working so hard, what's he gonna do on the ground, he says? He's just got to get up there. He took a couple of his men and joined Sparks in his plane."

"You were in Major Hobson's flight yesterday, weren't you, Duke?"

"Yeah. We bombed a convoy offshore from Balikpapen. On the way back we ran into some Jap Navy Zeros. We got at least one of them. Swanson's ship caught fire from engine trouble. His crew parachuted out safely and Swanson made a pretty crash-landing on the island and the fire was brought under control."

"I hear Lowery's gone."

"He passed out. Heart attack or maybe the oxygen tube broke. Bill, if I don't come back from a mission some time you take care of my things, will you? You know what I want done with them."

I didn't know then that this was the last time I was to see Duke. I didn't realize that this was the last time I would be chatting with Negley, Keightley, Morgan, Patillo, Pritchard, Luscombe, and many others.

I left the barracks grieving for the men who had died as Christ had wept at Lazarus' grave, little realizing that this was just a beginning; that many more of my fighting congregation would have to give their lives.

Chapter Fifteen

My work as billeting officer, although sometimes difficult, had its rewards. It helped bring me closer to the men.

Supply Sergeant Joseph J. Fersch helped me make the men as comfortable as possible. The Dutch brought us bamboo poles which we split and put up as frames for the mosquito nets. We used army cots and tried to give the men as many blankets as we could spare so they could use some of them for mattresses.

They were flying in from the United States all the time. After a long hop in a Flying Fortress, cooked chow and a bed to stretch out on are mighty welcome. Whenever possible I would meet the men as they came in and show them to their quarters.

They would talk for hours about the places they had seen en route to Java.

"We flew over Jerusalem, Jericho, and several of the mountains mentioned in the Bible. The limestone rock walls looked thousands of years old. We flew so low that I

could see the men in black robes plowing the fields," said Sergeant James Warley.

One flight tried to land on a Nazi airfield and was saved in time by radio communications from an Allied base. In Africa the guards had to keep the hungry natives from ransacking the planes for food.

Arrival of the men from the United States was always somewhat of a holiday. We'd all grab for the much-wanted magazines—*Life, Time, Newsweek, Click, Saturday Evening Post, Collier's.* Occasionally a book would be added to our library. A piece of American candy was always welcome. But combat would very quickly put an end to the holiday.

I was completing arrangements to visit our boys at Malang when Captain Stafford called and asked me to come with him to the railroad depot. The hospital train was bringing in the wounded from the *Houston* and *Marblehead,* which had been in action off Surabaya the day before. "I have a feeling there'll be work for you, Bill," our flight surgeon said.

The little depot at Djokjakarta was seething with goats, chickens, people, and baggage. They were all over the floor, resting on bundles as they waited for trains. Babies cried in their mothers' arms. Natives, half-castes, Dutch, Chinese, soldiers, and sailors were all moving about.

A group of ten Chinese Boy Scouts, dressed much like our own Scouts, were on hand to help with the wounded on the hospital train. I talked with Dr. Yap, a Chinese eye specialist, who was chairman of the Red Cross, while the Dutch ambulances were being made ready and women from the Red Cross were preparing food and refreshments.

"One man on train dead," a station attendant said in broken English a few minutes before the train arrived. One of our men drinking soda slowly took the bottle from his mouth. A Red Cross worker turned quickly to wipe her eyes. The Chinese Boy Scouts whispered to each other.

The train pulled into the station slowly. The cars were white with large red crosses painted on the sides. It was suggested that I go into the cars first to try to cheer up the men.

I was almost overcome by the odor of burned flesh. I hesitated for a moment and then felt ashamed. If they could stand it in there then I could too. Cots were suspended one on top of the other from the sides of what were formerly freight cars. There were about eight cots in a car.

I stopped to talk to a sailor in the first cot. I couldn't find words. My eyes became clouded. His face was burned charcoal black. His hair was singed almost to the scalp. Even his eyelashes and eyebrows were gone. There was color only in his eyes.

"It's been a tough trip. It's a wonder we didn't all die." The sailor barely moved his lips.

I paused beside another bunk and started to speak.

"No use, Chaplain, he's out of his misery."

I pulled the blanket over his head. It was as if his face had been covered with a stiff black mask.

I moved to the next cot and saw what looked like a pile of blankets.

"You aren't going to pass me by, are you?" The voice was weak like a faint hollow echo.

I knelt on the floor and pulled back the blankets. There was a large red gash on his skull over his blackened face.

Blood was oozing through the bandage. Down to his finger tips his arms were charred black.

"Pass you by! I should say not. What can I do for you, Sailor?"

"Just talk to me. Talk to me, please."

"Everything'll be all right. The Dutch are swell. They have good hospitals. We'll take good care of you."

"Do you think I can get well?"

"Of course you'll get well. We're praying for you."

"Thanks, Chaplain. Will I get new skin? Gosh, I can't go home looking like this after the war, can I?" He raised one arm and looked at the scorched skin. He didn't know what his face looked like.

"Don't you worry. Those medics can do wonderful things. They'll make you good as new. Don't you worry."

At the next bunk the sailor couldn't talk. He grunted. I could see the twitching muscles near his mouth under the dry, cracked, blackened skin.

"How's the war going?" I heard from a lower bunk. The cheeriness of the voice startled me. His face was dotted with holes many of which had already become infected. Flying particles of dried paint from the ship had become imbedded in his face.

"How are you feeling?"

"Fine. Shucks, there's nothing much the matter with me." He tried to move his body but fell back exhausted and closed his eyes in pain. "I'll be all right in a little while."

Some of the soldiers followed me through the aisles talking to the sailors and giving them water to drink and cigarettes. The Dutch had done everything possible to make

the men comfortable. But the sailors liked seeing Americans, hearing their own language.

Captain Stafford had the wounded put into the ambulances and I helped to carry out the body of the dead sailor. I uncovered his body and searched for identification. There was nothing by which to determine who he was. He was horribly burned and disfigured.

I suggested that we temporarily leave the dead sailor at the railroad station and help those who could benefit from it. I drove to the hospital in one of the ambulances. I held the stretcher firmly, trying to minimize the shock of the moving ambulance. My arms became numb. I wondered if holding the stretcher was doing him any good. But I continued to hold it.

The Dutch doctors and Captain Stafford started to work immediately on the cases that were most serious. How they were able to decide which of the men required attention first I'll never know.

In the operating room I helped remove the sailors' bandages. I swabbed their skin so it wouldn't dry up and crack. I held them while hypodermics were injected into those where some skin could be found. I was pleased when it seemed that I wasn't needed there any longer. I don't think I could have stayed another moment. My head was spinning. I was gripped by an unbearable nausea.

I walked out of the operating room and started to go to the veranda for some fresh air. A sailor was tossing on his bed. He was twisting and turning. The covers were on the floor. He couldn't find any part of his body on which to rest. Every part of his body was burned. I ran to his side.

He was screaming hysterically, "Tell them to kill me!

Tell them to kill me! I can't stand it! I can't stand it any more!"

"Lie still, Sailor. It'll hurt less. Lie still, please, Sailor, please."

"I can't! I can't!"

"Let's hold on just a little while longer. You'll be all right in just a few minutes. The doctor'll be with you soon. Just a few minutes."

He continued to toss violently. I called some native orderlies and motioned them to do as I was doing. As we held the charred body down with the tips of our fingers I prayed that God would protect him and relieve his suffering.

With a young Dutch medical intern I returned to the railroad station for the dead sailor. We brought the body to the hospital and placed it in the morgue. Because of the intense heat it was necessary that preparations for the burial be made immediately. Until about one o'clock in the morning I discussed funeral arrangements with some Dutch officials in the chief surgeon's office. They were deeply moved by the tragedy and wanted to show their sympathy with a large, impressive funeral procession, but such a funeral seemed impractical to me. We couldn't spare the men from our post required for the three-mile procession on foot to the cemetery. Besides, there was always the danger of an air raid. After considerable discussion they agreed with me and promised to have a funeral car available the next day.

I returned to the operating room. The work was finished. Orderlies and nurses were cleaning up. In the wards the sailors were quiet. Some were sleeping. Dr. Stafford had already gone back to the barracks. I returned to the am-

bulance. On the way to the barracks the words of the hymn "The Great Physician Now Is Near" kept going through my mind. I found myself humming the melody. At about two-thirty in the morning I arrived in my room. Major Hicks poked his head from behind the mosquito bar and wanted to know what had happened.

"Some twenty-two sailors badly burned. One died coming in on the train. Dutch doctor says a few more will probably die."

It was a brief report. But no amount of words, I thought, could tell of the horror, the tragedy, the suffering, and the bravery I had witnessed.

Till dawn I lay on my cot under the mosquito bar praying for them.

Chapter Sixteen

WE GATHERED for the funeral service at about noon. With the help of the Dutch everything had been arranged. A local carpenter built the coffin and the wooden cross for the grave. An American flag was borrowed from a hotel proprietor in Djokjakarta. The Dutch provided two drummers, a bugler, and flowers.

We drove to the cemetery with a Javanese escort. The men lifted the casket from the coach and we formed a funeral procession. The drummers and bugler sounded off and then led us into the cemetery. Behind me the soldiers carried the casket followed by a few of our men and some Dutch.

I had been to the cemetery earlier in the day and had a large plot of ground set aside—enough for about one hundred and fifty graves. Another section was reserved for the British.

When I returned to the hospital I was told that another of the sailors had died. Preparations having been completed

for the second funeral, I returned to my quarters and had several maps made of the cemetery so we would always know just where our men were buried.

Outside the barracks old Master Sergeant "Soup" Silva, from Puyallup, Washington, was as usual master of the situation. He was the Wallace Beery of our outfit; as tough and goodhearted a sergeant as any Hollywood film has ever depicted. Silva had acquired the nickname "Soup" when he was a mess sergeant. Forty-three-year-old Silva had been in the last war and had remained in the Regular Army.

"Hello, Chaplain, what're you doin' here?" he demanded. There was that growl in his voice that would get the enlisted men hopping to their chores.

"I think I have a job to do in this war, Sergeant."

"Chaplain, you'd better stand aside and let us fight rough like we have to. It may get too tough for you," he laughed, looking around for approval.

"You must be the famous Soup Silva!"

"Howja know?"

"Oh, that's easy. You're making a lot of noise just like they told me you always do."

Soup dug his elbow into someone standing next to him in appreciation of the retort.

"I got a real job for you, Chaplain—a job that needs some religion."

"What's the job?"

"'Tojo's Jinx' is out there on the field and the floor needs cleanin' up. There's blood all over the floor. One of our lads bled a lot in it. You wanna help?"

"Not my job, Soup, but I'll be glad to help."

We went to the plane together. Soup seemed glad I was

with him. One of the roughest, toughest men in our outfit didn't like cleaning up the blood of his buddy.

I put my finger through the bullet holes in the Flying Fortress.

"Who was hit, Soup?"

"Hegdahl."

"How'd it happen?"

"We're up there and I spot the yellow guy comin'. I hit him and he goes down. Hegdahl was trying to hit him, too, but missed. So I says to him: 'Son, here's how y'do it!' and I shoot another Jap down to show him how. Then Hegdahl shoots one down, and the kid gets happy and slaps me on the back. 'Be careful, boy!' I shout. But it's too late. He'd been hit."

"How'd he come out of it?"

"Well, this kid has guts and plenty of it. He takes a loose shell and braces his leg so he can go on shootin' that gun of his although he's got a nasty hole from a 50-caliber shell just above his knee. Well, I put a tourniquet on his leg to stop some of the bleedin' and went on shootin' at the Japs. Their hittin' the lad made me madder'n hell. The kid's lost lots of blood and's got plenty of pain, but he just hollers at us to get those dirty rats. I took care of the boy all the way back."

"Where is he? In Malang?"

"Yes. Look in on him when you get up there, huh, Chaplain? Wanna see how many Jap planes I've gotten? Here's the score." There were five red circles painted on the outside of the plane.

"Well, here's our job." Soup pointed to the blood on the floor of the plane near the bottom turret. The smell made

me feel faint. Sergeant John A. Potters, I remembered, had died from a bullet wound in the leg, just like the one Hegdahl got. They gave him a transfusion in the plane when it landed. But it was too late. He had lost too much blood.

When the plane was cleaned up we walked together from the field. Doing the job with Silva had made us friends. I thought I understood him better and that he respected me more. I thought of my father's words to me when I decided to enter the ministry: "A congregation can make or break a minister."

I visited the sailors at the hospital before proceeding with the second funeral on Sunday. One of them awoke as I passed his bed.

"Where's Knippe? Where's Knippe? Where's he?"

"They've taken him out for a while," a sailor across the aisle said. From the nod of his head I knew that Knippe, the man I was about to bury, had been his buddy.

Dr. Yap stood with me beside the funeral car and said he hoped that this was the last one.

Near the arch, which formed the entrance to the cemetery, a group of Dutch soldiers waited for us. The sergeant of the group said they all wanted to participate in the funeral. A double line of Dutch honorary pallbearers followed behind the casket which was carried by our soldiers. Many natives and half-castes joined the procession to the grave. I spoke briefly, and then the Dutch sergeant stepped forward and told us how his country mourns for our dead; how grateful they are for our help. He then placed a wreath by the flag-covered coffin. The words "Rust in Vrede Kameraad" were lettered in black on the white ribbon.

Sergeant Christenson sang two verses of a hymn and then I read from the Bible: "Let not your heart be troubled: . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. . . ."

Taps were sounded, the flag was removed, and the coffin was lowered into the grave. Dutch soldiers filed by, each of them placing a shovelful of dirt on the coffin. Then we all bowed our heads, and I led them in prayer.

"Look, Chaplain," a soldier said as we started to leave.

A Javanese girl, dressed in white, was putting sprays of flowers on the grave of the sailor we had buried yesterday.

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After spending a few hours at the hospital I returned to the barracks to prepare for the evening service. But I couldn't get those sailors from the *Marblehead* and *Houston* out of my mind. How happy those two Chinese sailors had been when I brought I. G. Pouw, the Chinese minister from the Dutch Reformed Church, to talk to them. How grateful the men had been when I brought them the books, games, ice cream, and candy. Lieutenant Vincent Roddy had given me twenty dollars for the sailors.

In the mess hall we hardly touched our chow that evening. How could we eat? None of them would ever eat with us again. "Duke" DuFrane, Negley, Patillo, Burney, Keightley, Pritchard, Morgan, Luscombe: they were all dead.

The B-17's had taken off at about nine in the morning to attack a Jap airfield at Kendari, in the Celebes. Captain DuFrane, having been there before, was given command

of the mission and led "A" flight while Captain Strother headed "B" flight.

"We were climbing slowly because we had a long way to go," said Lieutenant James E. Worley, who was in Strother's plane. "At a few minutes after ten o'clock, at 17,000 feet, with no clouds near us, we hear: 'Pilot to crew: pursuit planes to right and left of us!' Impossible. But there they are, just out of range to the right, to the left, and above us. We take no chances. They should be friendly, being so close to our own base, but we prepare to fight. In the nose the bombardier removes his sight head, unlimbers his gun for action, and stands by. Danny Boone turns the top turret toward the nearest fighter plane. Lewis and Parker man the side and belly guns. Schier is on the tail guns. We still can't believe they're Japs. There's only a white splash of markings on the fuselage. We can't see the tops or bottoms of the wings. Probably our own P-40's—they're long overdue. Now they're pulling ahead. They fly ahead for about a minute, then suddenly the two lead fighters turn back directly toward us. They head for Duke's ship. The Jap leader closes in, firing all guns. Machine-gun and cannon bullets rock Duke's ship. He's afire. Now we're busy. The Jap has zoomed up right in our face. Thank God we're ready. We fill him full of bullets, and that Jap's out. Duke's ship, burning, drops out of formation, and his crew bails out. Strother now takes command and calls pilots to close in on him. We're jumped by a large force of fighters. They come from both sides of the nose so fast we can hardly position our guns for attack. We turn one away with our nose gun. Strother calls: 'Fighter, three o'clock ahead, get him,

Worley. Another just back of him.' We hit the first one, and his cowling flies off. He turns fast and falls off. 'How do you like that, you yellow dog?' someone yells. We turn our gun on another, and suddenly 'Bull' Dawson yells, 'Here comes that yellow rat again!' We swing our gun. Too late. He's under our left wing, his guns are filling us full of bullets. We look at each other and wonder if we'll catch fire. One engine's dead. No hydraulics. One bomb-bay door is swinging wildly in the slip stream. Strother orders us to take cover in the clouds ahead. Gas is streaming from the punctured bomb-bay tank. I've been yelling to Danny to pull the emergency release to dump the tank and bombs, but during the fighting I accidentally knocked my radio-control knob off the circuit, so Danny didn't hear me. But he sees the bombs as soon as we're away from the fighters and pulls the release, dumping the bombs and tanks on Bali."

"How's it you didn't return to your base at Malang, Morley?"

"When we got over Malang there's an air raid on, so we came here."

"How about the boys who bailed out?"

"Not a chance. The Japs machine-gunned them while they were floatin' down."

Before we left the mess hall the message came that our men would go on another mission that night. Briefing of the crews would be at eight o'clock.

I walked up the stairs slowly to my room to prepare for the scheduled evening service. "Am I doing enough? Am I doing enough?" It began to torment me again. The men

were so tired. If I could only relieve one of them at a gun position. If I could only go up with them to help.

Lieutenant Vincent Roddy stopped me at the head of the stairs. "Bill, I'm taking this mission tonight. Pray for us, Bill. Pray for us, because if God is with us we'll return. If He isn't, well, it'll be our last mission."

I wish that every chaplain who is tormented as I was that night has a Lieutenant Vincent Roddy to say to him: "We're going into combat and we need your prayer."

I walked to my room with renewed spirit. I had a job to do for the boys leaving on the mission tonight. I was already doing the job. "Lord, we need Your help," I heard myself saying as I stuffed the Bible, the hymnbooks, and the Testaments into my musette bag. "That's the thing to do. Pray! It's just like Vincent said. If God is with us everything will be all right."

When I came down, the crews were being briefed for their mission. I stopped a moment and watched them get their instructions, then I threw my bag of books over the handlebars of my bicycle and pedaled to the other barracks for the service.

We sang some hymns with the roar of plane engines blanketing the sounds from the little portable organ.

"There's a lad in one of those planes who asked that we pray for this mission. He said that if God wants them to get back safely, then they will. It's all up to God, he said. That's the truth, men. It's all up to God. And now it's up to us. It's up to us to pray to God that He protect those men of ours, just as he asked us to."

As I talked, the men slowly bowed their heads.

I rushed to the field early in the morning to check on last night's mission.

"They're all O.K."

"Thanks to God," I said.

A truck was leaving for Malang. I had been waiting for a plane. But planes were scarce, and almost every flight went out ready for action with its bays loaded with bombs and the belts choked with bullets. As a chaplain I wasn't permitted in a combat ship, so I seized this opportunity to go by truck to Malang, where part of the 19th Bombardment Group, some fighters from the 17th Pursuit Group, and the field artillery unit from Texas were stationed.

Malang had been hit almost continuously. The boys flying in to our base said you could set your watch by the arrival of the Jap planes. They came punctually almost every morning at about ten o'clock.

When we neared Surabaya Lieutenant Jack Dodd left us. I had wanted to go to Surabaya with him. We had some men in the hospital, and I wanted to see if my friend, the Dutch bakery-shop proprietor, and his family had come through those air raids safely. But there was no time now.

We arrived at the Singassari Airfield, in Malang, at nine o'clock. Everything was black. There had been a bad raid earlier in the day. The men were on edge. A Dutch officer who hadn't spoken up soon enough had been shot by a guard.

"Better be careful moving around the field, Chaplain."

I went to the barracks for a cot.

"Here's one, Chaplain. Take Lieutenant Holden's cot."

"Thanks. Where's Holden?"

"Killed in a plane today. Funny how it happened. He

just keeps askin' to go back there and work one of them guns. Finally he goes back to the gun all excited and eager. We're flyin' at high altitude. Every few minutes he calls over the wire. Soon we don't hear him any more. He's quiet. The pilot calls him, but there's no answer. The aerial gunner goes back to see him and finds him almost gone. I was copilot, so I went to him. We tried artificial respiration for four hours, but he died."

"What happened to him?"

"No oxygen."

I put my toothbrush, towel, and Bible on Holden's cot and went to the field to see some of the men. Although it was late at night, they were working in the hangars, overhauling motors, changing engines. I walked around chatting with them. Suddenly a guard stood before me. It was Hal Walling.

"Well, this is swell!"

"Good to see you, Chaplain Bill."

"How are you, Hal?"

"Couldn't be better, considerin'. Gosh, I feel so much older than when we were together just a few weeks ago on the S.S. *Republic*. What'd we use to call it? The 'S.S. *Repulsive*.'"

"What do you do here?"

"Guard duty—most anything t'help out."

"Tommy here?"

"Tommy Whitehead? Sure. I'll find him for you. Gosh, but we've needed a preacher here. We had a bad raid today. They hit our barracks. Y'know, Chaplain Bill, I feel different about religion. It's different now than it was even on the *Republic*. I feel like a kid who's been away from home a

long time and when he gets back he just wants to hang around Mama. That's the way I've been here. I keep thinking about God all the time like I've been away from Him all the time."

I was up early in the morning so I could have a good look at Singassari and spend as much time as possible with the men before returning to Djokjakarta. At one of the hangars the men of the 22d Squadron were working. Small, friendly, steady Sergeant "Pat" Patterson with the big voice greeted me. Even Pat was unnerved. A shell had pierced the roof of the car he was driving. The armor-piercing bullet had struck just behind his head and lodged in the floor of the reconnaissance car. The boys liked to tell the story about Pat and the surprise Jap raid. "Pat doesn't see the Japs but hears some shootin'. He comes out of the hangar shoutin' indignant-like: 'Who in blazes fired them shots?' "

I asked for Bill Oglesby, but he was out somewhere working on a plane. Most of the squadron were already at the "picnic grounds" when we arrived. They had created the grounds about five miles from the field as a place to have chow undisturbed by falling bombs. They looked tired and sleepy. This was not surprising, for they worked all night and tried to sleep during the day. Some of the men would go to sleep at the cemetery in order to get away from the air raids.

The men wanted a service held, but there wasn't time. Some of them had gone into town once or twice to church, but the services weren't in English. "Just having you around awhile, Chaplain, is like having a service," one of the boys said.

At the hospital later in the afternoon I ribbed Lieutenant John C. Mays, whom I had known at Fort Douglas, for being in bed with only a bad ankle. The two serious cases were Private First Class Joseph De Mott and Private First Class Arvid B. Hegdahl, Soup Silva's buddy, who had been shot in "Tojo's Jinx." With the money I had brought from Djokjakarta I bought books, Testaments, games, and candy for them.

I had evening mess with Colonel Thorpe of Wichita Falls, and a number of other officers. It was a real Texas reunion.

"How do you like our skylight?" One of the officers pointed to the ceiling. A Jap bomb had blasted a large hole through the roof.

Lieutenant W. R. Stone, from Abilene, was among the group. He had written a letter to his mother before he and the rest of the boys became prisoners of the Japs. "I am not homesick particularly," he wrote, "but I would like to see all of you, because I do love every one of you very much. Where I am I am well taken care of, so don't worry. I will always be all right as long as I have the prayers and love of all of you."

Chapter Seventeen

I "BUMMED" a ride back to my base at Djokjakarta on an LB Liberator piloted by Lieutenant Clyde Kelsay. It was time I was getting back. I wanted to organize my work. There were other camps to be visited, and Colonel Hobson wanted me to write letters to the families of the men under his command who had been killed. This I could do better from Djokjakarta. What was happening to the sailors? Several of them had been on the critical list when I last saw them.

I climbed into the plane and slumped into a chair.

"Whatsa matter, Chaplain, tired? You look as if you were out on a mission last night."

"I was—I mean I *feel* as if I was," I said, and I meant it. There's nothing more difficult than waiting on the ground for a flight to return. While I was awake I prayed for them. While I was asleep I dreamed of them on their mission looking for the objective, dropping their bombs, dodging the ack-ack, fighting their way back against Jap Zeros.

It had been impossible to sleep when I had returned,

shortly before one in the morning, from the "briefing." As I walked through the room to my cot I saw their names lettered on their flight bags: Strother, Watson, Gardner, Worley, Beck, Nunlist, Habberstad, Shumaker, Northcutt, Buds, Bostwick, Mathewson, Key, McKenna, Skiles.

All around me were their empty beds. They were in those planes headed for Makassar to bomb the Jap landing party reported by Naval Intelligence. Colonel Hobson was apparently disturbed that he had to call them back from what was to have been their first night off in some time.

"I'm sorry, men, I didn't like calling you back tonight. But the job's got to be done. Planes from all over the island will participate. You will leave at thirty-minute intervals. Captain Strother will lead the first flight. Captain Hughes will give you the order of the flight. Do a good job."

Captain Hughes then read the order of the flight and Captain Strother said: "All in my flight, follow me. The planes are ready."

The men filed past me out of the room to the field carrying their flying boots, maps, and oxygen masks. The new arrivals seemed excited, eager for their mission. The veterans moved slowly, calmly chatting about how they had planned to spend the evening before the unexpected mission was announced.

Captain Strother walked by, looking very tired.

I put my hand on his shoulder. "We'll be remembering you, Don."

"Thanks, Bill." He shook my hand.

The new gunner went by. "Take care of yourself, kid."

"I'll take care of the Japs!" he shot back.

I lay on my cot praying for the men. I kept seeing the

embarrassed half-smile of that new gunner as he stood stiffly at attention, reciting his serial number.

The roll had been called, and Colonel Hobson had noticed that the new gunner had not answered.

"Where's your new gunner, Captain Strother?"

"He was here just a minute ago, Colonel."

There was a commotion in the corner of the room and then the new gunner jumped to his feet.

"What's your serial number, son?" the colonel asked.

"Nineteen million, two hundred and sixteen thousand, three hundred and sixty-four, sir."

"Boy, that's a big army we have," someone said, and everybody laughed.

It was such a relief to learn in the morning that they had bombed the objective successfully and that the new gunner and all the men on the mission had returned safely to the base.

Throughout the flight to Djokjakarta the crew kidded me good-naturedly.

"What'll you do if the plane's attacked, Chaplain?" one asked.

"Can you handle one of these babies?" Another pointed to a machine gun.

"Scared, Chaplain?"

"Don't let 'em frighten you. Just stick close to me; if we have to bail out, I'll show you what to do."

Frankly I was scared. As a chaplain, pledged to non-combatancy, I was not permitted to participate in action. No matter how fierce the attack, no matter how much we were outnumbered, no matter what the consequences I would

have to sit there. I kept hoping that I wouldn't have to face such a situation.

By the time the volcanic peak and the ancient Hindu temple near Djokjakarta came into view my eyes hurt from peering into the sky for enemy planes. Kelsay circled the field and skillfully brought the plane down.

"We've needed you here, Bill," Major Earle Hicks greeted me. "Couple more of those navy boys died."

Christ must have had a good sense of humor, I often thought, as I walked through the wards at the hospital at Djokjakarta. Men in hospitals want to smile. There's little that they appreciate more than good cheer—something to laugh about. Frequently when I'd be racking my brain, trying to remember a story to tell to one of the sick boys, I would think how helpful it would be if chaplains were blessed with the ability to tell a good story with the talent of a Harry Hershfield.

The sailors from the *Marblehead* and *Houston* were in good spirits. They greeted me cheerfully.

One of them, his burned face and body still covered with bandages, said in mock seriousness: "Those Japs sure are unfair. Imagine! I spend two years in the China Sea collecting souvenirs and then the Japs come along and destroy the whole lot of 'em. Imagine!"

"Yeah, war's so uncivilized!"

"We got an American doctor now, Chaplain."

"Is he the navy doctor we've been expecting?"

"Yeah. Dr. Wassell's his name."

They seemed to be glad to have an English-speaking doctor in constant attendance.

A few minutes later I met my old shipmate on the S.S. *President Polk,* Dr. Wassell. It was only three weeks since we were together on that convoy from Australia. But so much had happened.

I gave Dr. Wassell my records of the burials and we talked about the sailors. He wanted to get a rest camp somewhere in the country for those of the men who were no longer in need of hospital care.

With Dr. Wassell's permission I later took the sailors on a bus ride. All who were able to walk came. Lieutenant Bernard Donally, a doctor, helped me to care for the men. We drove to the airfield where we showed them our planes. Our soldiers made every effort to entertain the sailors. After a long ride we went to the favorite American eating place, Toko Owen. They served good ham and eggs and the ice cream tasted almost American. The sailors bought little presents for the nurses at the hospital. Probably each of the boys had some kind of trinket for the favorite nurse of all, the beautiful half-caste girl.

When I returned to the barracks I learned that Captain Don Strother was dead.

Losing a man in combat is often more grievous to the chaplain than is the death of a member of his peacetime congregation. As a chaplain during wartime you live closer to your men. It's as though every one of them suddenly became your relative.

You know his wife, his parents. You've seen for the hundredth time that much-thumbed snapshot of his baby. He's told you of his plans when the war is over. He's confided in you. Then he's dead. And his loved ones are not there to mourn for him. They don't even know about it.

While he is being buried, they're writing letters—writing to him about the future they'll have together when he returns. While he's dying his wife at home is giving birth to the "blue-eyed baby girl he always wanted."

So you learn of Don's death and you think that maybe this time it won't hit you so hard because you've seen so many die before. Maybe you've become a bit hardened.

But you know Don's wife, Eleanor. Only a few hours ago Don was telling you about how he met her the first time at the air-line office where he'd been a pilot. You know, too, Don's son, Toby. Only a few months ago he introduced him proudly as "the future squadron commander." You know of Don's father too. You know them all. And so when you return to the barracks and discover that Captain Don Strother is dead you are learning it for Eleanor and their son, Toby, and his parents, and for the baby not yet born. You feel the impact of the tragedy for them all. And you mourn for yourself, too, as his friend and his chaplain. And you look up to the Lord and ask Him to please see to it that Don's death be not in vain.

Chapter Eighteen

THERE is no long-range planning for the chaplain in combat. You don't wait for Sunday. The war doesn't stop on that day. In combat, the Sabbath is any time you can get some men together for a service, a singsong, or a Bible-study class. Worship time is any time the ground crews can spare a few minutes from their work; any time you are standing with a group of men about to take off on a mission.

You'll stand under the wing of a B-17 and they'll gather around you as they take a last sip of coffee from the thermos or munch a piece of chocolate.

You hold the Bible in your hand and you quote a line or two from the Scriptures. They stop munching their chocolate; they put the cover on the thermos, and they listen. Then you utter a simple prayer, asking God to protect them and to look after their loved ones at home. And while you're praying the motors are being warmed up and are making so much noise that they can't hear your prayer. But it doesn't matter. They are thinking their own prayer.

This Sunday I was to conduct a service for about four hundred Chinese Christians. Reverend Pouw, my Chinese friend, had invited me. I was preparing for the service when Sabor, the native, motioned me to follow him. From his antics I knew he was advising me that an air raid was about to take place. Our sirens hadn't as yet been sounded, but he knew. The natives had their own signals to warn against the approach of enemy planes. When a native in any part of the island saw enemy planes he began to beat his wooden drum. The signal would be relayed until the vicinity would reverberate with the booming sound.

In a few seconds the whine of our sirens joined with the natives' drums. Seven planes suddenly appeared and circled the airfield. They banked and dived to attack. Shells ripped through the air. There came from the Zeros a seemingly light tat-tat-tat followed by several shattering boom-boom-booms.

I hopped onto the seat of a passing jeep to get to the center of the field. Each of us watched from our side of the jeep for the return of the planes. In a moment we heard the buzz of a Zero over us. It raked the field with machine-gun fire but was hit by gunfire from the ground. The Zero tried to climb. It made some headway, then it began to fall rapidly, smoke pouring from the engine. In a moment the plane crashed against the side of a near-by mountain.

One LB-30 was gone. A considerable quantity of gas had been set afire. A bamboo plane—a model made of bamboo and straw—was burning briskly. But no one was hurt.

A sergeant was looking reproachfully at his gun as a mother does at her precocious youngster who refuses to re-

cite the poem he knows so well. "Darn it, just when I have a Zero in my sights she has to go and jam on me!"

"Why aren't you at services this morning, Chaplain?" a soldier at one of the gun pits asked.

"Those Japs just don't have any respect for the Sabbath, fellows."

"Well, don't you worry, Chaplain, we'll change all that one day soon."

I was at the bank in town about to change some more American money into Javanese currency when someone tapped me on the shoulder and called me aside. He was an American captain.

"Hold onto your dough, Chaplain. You won't have any use for this Java coin except maybe for souvenirs. We're leaving the island soon. We can't hold out much longer. Another day or two at most . . ."

This didn't sound possible, so I exchanged my money anyhow. Only a few days before, in Malang, Major Nuell Pazdrall, a medical officer, had indicated that the Army was planning a one-thousand-bed American hospital. "There'll be lots of work for you," he had said.

How could we leave the Dutch people there to the Japanese? They called us their saviors. The more I thought about it, however, the more logical seemed the captain's prediction. Our men were tired. Few replacements were coming through. The Japs seemed to have control over the Java skies. They seemed to be bombing at will. They were losing planes, but they were close to their source of supply. We were losing planes that couldn't be replaced rapidly enough.

Wednesday morning Major Hicks said, "Bill, you'd better get your things ready. We're getting off the island tonight."

I went into town to find out about the sailors from the *Marblehead* and *Houston*. How were they going to get out? Dr. Wassell wasn't there, but someone told me that he was arranging for their transportation.

On the street I saw the Chinese pastor, Reverend Pouw, and avoided him. "When we learned that you Americans were coming we knew God had answered our prayers," he had said. Now we were leaving.

"You Americans will stay with us to the end, won't you?" a Dutch merchant asked. But there was no question in the tone of his voice. He didn't expect any answer. To him there could be but one answer. I hurried out of the store and walked quickly to my quarters.

Later in the afternoon, when all the men were assembled in the barracks, Colonel Hobson made the announcement. He spoke quickly. He wanted to get it over with. The Japs were landing on the north. We had to leave that night. We were to pack our barracks bags with the things we really needed. The rest was to be put into the trunks and sent by truck to the docks at Tjilatjap. It was a sad meeting.

All evening we packed. I jammed many of the hymnbooks and Testaments into boxes and asked the men to carry some in their pockets out of Java. I closed up my portable organ and packed the athletic equipment into another box.

Later we began to load the boxes and trunks into the trucks that had backed up to the door. The natives stood around, watching silently, puzzled. The men who had been assigned to drive the motor convoy were trying to snatch

some sleep. They were stretched out on the floor, some of them using their bags as pillows.

Upstairs in one of the dormitories I found a pile of trunks and suitcases. Lettered on them were the names: Straubel, Morgan, DuFrane, Robinson. In those trunks were their possessions. How meaningful these things would be to the wives and parents at home. We were crowded, but it didn't seem right to leave their things here for the Japs to plunder. It was enough that they took their lives. I called a few men, and we carried the baggage downstairs and put it into the trucks.

Shortly before midnight I asked Colonel Hobson how he wanted me to travel.

"You've taken a convoy through before, Bill. I think you'd better go along with Lieutenant Dodd. You'll be able to help."

At midnight the truck convoy was ready to leave. The drivers were sitting around waiting for the order to proceed. Sabor came to say good-by. Lieutenant Jack Dodd said we were ready to shove off.

As we prepared to leave, one of the sergeants said to me: "I'll bust wide open the first guy who makes fun of the British or Aussies for 'vacuatin.'" He smacked his fist into the palm of his other hand to illustrate what he meant.

Chapter Nineteen

A GROUP of Catholic priests who had lived near our barracks watched our trucks roll away.

This convoy to Tjilatjap was so different from the one several weeks ago to Djokjakarta. Then we were coming to our base. We were replacements to help fight the enemy. We were in a sense advancing—coming to meet the enemy. There was danger, of course, but there was also victory in the offing. But now we were retreating. We were getting out because Java was doomed. The enemy was on our heels. There was no possibility of victory in this—only the victory of not being captured by the Japs; the victory of being among those able to carry on the struggle from another base.

We moved in a southwesterly direction with only tiny lights to guide the way. I watched the speedometer carefully. There is always the danger of unconsciously picking up speed in a convoy. It seemed to me that we were moving too rapidly. In a moment we were off the paved road enveloped in huge clouds of thick dust.

"Let's slow down," I said to the driver. "No use killing ourselves."

Just then the driver jammed on his brakes. We couldn't see the truck ahead. Our dim lights couldn't penetrate the dust. We were swiftly heading for the jungle. Our truck swayed dangerously as the driver turned first left then right at the fork in the road.

The trucks stopped behind us. I suggested they wait there while several of us went down each of the roads to look for marks from our tires. We drove slowly for about a quarter of a mile and came to another division in the road. There were no signs.

When we returned the entire convoy had reassembled. Lieutenants Davis, LaSalle, and I were discussing which road to take when we heard some arguing behind us. One soldier was on the ground, blood flowing from his nose. The other stood over him with his fists clenched.

"What's going on here?" Captain Hughes demanded.

"If that guy knew how to drive we wouldn't be lost now."

The men were on edge. They were irritable, nerves frayed by exhaustion and anxiety. The ship at Tjilatjap wouldn't wait for us. If we didn't get there on time we would probably be left behind. The men apologized to each other and went back to their trucks.

In a little while a Dutch soldier on a motorcycle came along. He offered to lead us to the main road. Soon, however, our Dutch guide left us. We were on our own again. It was smooth riding for a while until we branched off on a narrow, dusty path with the walls of the jungle on either side. Again we came to a fork in the road. Natives stood there, some waving us left and some right.

I took a jeep and with Sergeant Pete Tavish went down one of the roads. Soon we saw fresh tire tracks. I sent Pete back to guide the rest of the convoy while I waited there to make sure that none of them branched off on the road just behind us.

Actually I was there for only about ten minutes, but it seemed like hours. When the jeep pulled away it became pitch black. In a little while, however, my eyes became accustomed to the darkness and I began to see the jungle all around me. The trees and foliage took on weird, frightening shapes—many not unlike Jap faces. The trucks came by and I waved them on to the right road. The dust was so thick that the trucks looked as if they were cutting through a heavy fog. My throat was parched and my eyes burned from the dust.

We heard the sound of horns behind us. One of the trucks had broken down. We decided to try to tow it. I rode in the damaged truck behind the lead car.

We rolled along for some time and I must have dozed off. I was awakened by a shout from the driver. We were making a sharp left turn. Then he swerved quickly to the right and suddenly there was a narrow bridge before us. The driver pulled hard on the steering wheel, but there was little he could do. The truck ahead was pulling us too fast. I braced myself for the crash. It looked as if we were surely going through the bridge railing and into the river. We ripped the railing on the right with our front wheel but the momentum of the truck carried us across safely. We stopped and discovered that we had lost one of our front wheels.

The contents of the truck were transferred and we drove

on till dawn. We had coconuts for breakfast. The cool coconut milk was refreshing but it couldn't take the place of a dish of ham and eggs and a cup of coffee.

In a few hours we reached the outskirts of Tjilatjap. Lieutenant Dodd went to town to find out where we were to go. Meanwhile we were getting hungry. As we searched for food, I became so faint that I almost collapsed. One of the men found a banana. That was the best banana I have ever eaten.

At the docks we were ordered to begin loading the ship immediately.

"But the men haven't been fed. They're hungry," I protested.

"We don't have time to eat. We gotta get out of here. If we stop to eat it may be our last meal."

It was reason enough, but I knew the condition of the men. How could they load the ship when they were hungry? I talked to one of the officers about it.

"Sorry, Chaplain, those men have to stand by their trucks for loading orders."

"But they've had an all-night journey and they're hungry. Give them a few minutes to eat. I'll watch the trucks and call them back if you need them before they're finished. They'll work twice as fast after they've eaten something."

The officer agreed.

"Chow, men, chow!" I called loudly. That was a mistake. Everyone who heard that thought it was an invitation. Unfortunately there wasn't enough for the hundreds of soldiers and sailors, Dutch and natives crowded on the dock.

The men ate the cold meat, jelly, and bread that Mess Sergeant Dan Fitz prepared and then started to load the

Dutch ship, *Abbekerk*, which was to take us away from Java.

"Hi, Chaplain."

"Hello, Bill."

I turned and saw some of the sailors from the *Marblehead* and *Houston* who had come to Tjilatjap by bus.

"Sure glad to see you. Maybe you can help us, Chaplain."

"What's up, fellows?"

"We can't get on the navy ship that was supposed to take us. They can't care for us."

"Well, why can't you come on our ship?"

"Do you think it's possible?"

"Wait here, boys, I'll go and see."

I talked to Major Thompson, commander of the American troops on the ship, about the navy boys. "I'll take care of them. We'll feed them."

There were only about six staterooms on the entire ship. These were reserved for the critically sick. One of the sailors was put into a stateroom and the rest of them slept on the starboard side of the upper deck. I gathered some blankets, army comforters, and flying equipment for their bedding. One of them used my bedroll. I collected as many blankets as I could for them. I knew that the slightest breeze would give them chills.

The loading continued under lights. At ten o'clock the whine of the air-raid sirens came. The lights quickly went out on the docks, but the lights on the ship remained lit, as the switch couldn't be found. For a few long minutes our ship was a perfect target.

"Turn out those lights!" The shouts came from the dock

and the ship. Then a few started shooting at the lights with their .45's before the switch was found. For almost an hour I crouched in the darkness near the sailors, waiting for the attack. The all-clear signal was finally heard. The lights went on, and the loading of the ship was resumed. Hour after hour they kept on with the loading. They couldn't possibly get all the cargo into the small freighter. A good deal of it would have to be left behind.

From the deck I heard a sergeant saying, "Drive that truck up here first. That's the chaplain's things, see? It's gotta get on."

Thirteen hundred men—Dutchmen, British, American and Australian soldiers—were on the *Abbekerk,* a freighter with normal accommodations for only nineteen.

To feed the men a kitchen composed of a unit of four field ranges was set up on the deck. Hardtack, eggs (until they became rotten), and "corn willie" made up our meals which we ate out of our mess kits or pans. "Corn willie"—a form of corned-beef hash—was part of every meal.

There were enough lifeboats for the sick only. A few rafts had been rigged up out of bamboo poles and empty gas drums. If it became necessary to abandon ship the orders were to jump overboard and try to swim to one of these improvised life rafts.

As we traveled south the nights became colder. The sailors were in agony. The strong winds cut into their burned, sensitive skin. One of the sailors lay on the deck shivering. He was sicker than the rest. The charred skin on his arms, legs, and chest was covered with bandages. I covered him with my blankets and helped him find a com-

fortable position. After a while he fell asleep, murmuring, "Thanks, Chaplain Bill, you're swell to us." He lay there close to me, like a sick child, tossing, turning, and mumbling in his sleep. The sea was rough and the boat rolled from side to side. I put my arm across his cot as he slept to keep him from falling off.

I was awakened during the night by a crash and a scream. I jumped to my feet, grabbed my flashlight, and ran below deck. An Australian soldier was under a pile of lumber that had become loose when the ship rolled. I quickly lifted the large planks from his body. Blood was streaming from a gash over his eye.

"Badly hurt?"

"No sir, not so bad."

We awoke Captain Crane in the sick bay, who patched up the Aussie's eye.

On Saturday at about six o'clock in the evening someone noticed a black speck in the sky. In a moment all eyes were on that speck as it came toward us.

"Rising sun! It's the Japs!" someone yelled.

The alarm to rush to battle stations was sounded.

One of the sailors ran to the deck railing and tried to jump overboard. With some difficulty he was brought back to his cot and quieted.

I went down to the main deck, stopping for a moment to pray. "It doesn't look like we have much chance of getting through this, Lord," I said to myself. "We have few guns. We have no escort ships to engage the enemy. We have only You for protection. If it is Your wish that we die now, please help us to live our last few minutes as You would

want us to." I said "Amen" aloud and went out on the main deck.

Sergeant Donohue was standing there with a number of soldiers. There was no officer to organize them.

"Where are those 50-caliber machine guns, Chaplain?"

"I think they're below deck." I jumped on the hatch. "Sergeant Donohue, why don't you lead these men? Why don't you get that stuff up here on deck where it'll do some good? Fellows, follow Sergeant Donohue!"

A line was quickly formed from below deck. In a moment the boxes of ammunition for the 50-caliber guns were moving up.

On my way back to the sailors I stopped near one of the gun positions and said to the soldier, "Do a good job!"

He winked confidently.

I sat with the sailors as the Jap plane came over us. The plane began to dive, and our big gun boomed in the backaft. The smaller guns opened up. Our fire must have been too heavy. The Jap climbed, circled, and returned. Our guns roared again. The ship quivered. Several times the plane returned and then disappeared.

The sailors were nervous, restless.

"At least, if we were on one of our own ships!"

"Yeah, then we could fight 'em."

"Here we just float along waiting for them to come back."

"Sure, now that they know where we are they'll send back a squadron of bombers."

"Or maybe he'll radio our position to the Jap fleet."

"What do you think, Chaplain?"

"I think we ought to stop worrying. Worrying isn't going

to frighten away any Jap planes or subs. We've got good guns and good gunners. God protected us from that one Jap and He can protect us again if the enemy returns."

A hospital orderly came to me. "You're wanted in the sick bay, Chaplain."

One of the men had become hysterical again. He had flung himself face down and was beating the floor with his fists. He didn't want to die on a ship, he screamed hysterically. He wanted to get off. Shell shock had left him with a fear of traveling on ships. A few minutes before we left Tjilatjap he had disappeared from the ship. We found him on the dock just before sailing time. I picked James up from the floor and succeeded in calming him.

At about ten o'clock Sunday morning we had Church Call. The men pulled the hymnbooks I had given them at Djokjakarta out of their pockets. Sergeant Worthimer played my portable organ which by this time was quite scratched and battered. I felt keenly the power of God in that simple service on the deck.

"Shorty" Harvey Clark chatted with me after the service. "This is the first time I've been to church in six years."

"What made you come today, Shorty?"

"It's Bill Oglesby's fault. I was sitting on my bunk during the attack yesterday, about to take a few drinks from that quart bottle I had brought out of Java. So Bill sees me and asks me what good it'd do me. 'It'll steady my nerves,' I told him. 'Wait,' he says, 'I got something that'll do you more good than that.' And he hands me the Bible and tells me if I'd read it and believe, come what may I'd have the strength to face it."

"So what'd you do, Shorty?"

"Well, I took the Bible from him, but when he left I also took a drink of liquor. Well, during the raid I notice Bill's as calm as a cucumber and I'm just as nervous. So when I heard there's gonna be a service this morning I decided to come. Maybe there's something to what Oglesby said."

Chapter Twenty

I WAS GLAD when we arrived in Melbourne. It had been a tiresome three-day trip by train from the port of Freemantle where we had docked.

There was a task I dreaded but which had to be done. It hadn't been possible to get to it before because we were moving around so much. But now I could sit down and write to the nearest relatives of our men who had been killed. Also, arrangements had to be made to send back their personal effects.

As I sat in my tent writing these letters I began to realize that we had come out of Java with about half the men we had there when I arrived. An entire 131st Artillery unit —approximately 800 men—were either missing in action or prisoners of the Japs. It was as if when you came to your church one day you learned that every other person in your congregation was gone. Writing these letters was like taking inventory—an inventory of human beings. The full meaning of our losses somehow didn't strike me while I was in

Java. It came a little at a time; for now the entire list was before me, on neatly typed memoranda:

SUBJECT: Enlisted Men Killed In Action
TO: A-1 USAAFIA, Melbourne, Victoria
The following named Enlisted Men were killed in action . . .

And there was another list for the officers killed in action.

Writing these letters was a difficult task. It meant remembering—remembering pleasantries you had exchanged with men you would never see again.

Of course the nearest of kin were notified by the War Department, but I knew that the brief message from Washington wasn't enough. They must long for every scrap of information about their boy—for every detail about how he died. I realized this more keenly when I began to receive letters such as this one from the wife of Technical Sergeant Stephan Androkovich:

"Langley View, Virginia

"Received your letter and words cannot express just how much better I feel knowing so many things you have written and can believe. My mind has never stopped wondering and wanting to know just what did happen. In the letter from you, it just seems to answer all my questions that I have wanted to ask. I received a letter from the 19th Group with orders saying my husband, Sergeant Androkovich, was rewarded with the Distinguished Flying Cross on February 15. I also received a fine letter from his squadron commander, Major A. E. Keyes. He said his being alive today was because of Stephan's ingenuity and alertness. Once

again thank you for your fine letter. It makes me feel like I could just picture the entire services. May God bless you and help you in your wonderful work. It is to Him I look for comfort as only He can give it."

And from the sister of Sergeant Ralph W. Chorn:

"Hendrix, Oklahoma

"Because my parents are prostrated with grief over the death of my only brother, Sergeant Ralph Chorn, they have asked me to convey to you the heartfelt gratitude of our entire family.

"Words cannot express our appreciation of your kindness to our loved one, and it is a great comfort to know that since it was God's will he should be called, that he did have a Christian burial.

"Since Ralph was the only boy in our family his passing hurt all of us very deeply. Your letter cleared up some of this hurt by explaining how he was laid to rest.

"Just two weeks before we learned of his death we sent him a carton of cigarettes. If it is convenient would you see that these are given to some other of our boys down there?"

And from Sergeant Albert J. Kennedy's mother:

"Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

"I want to thank you for taking the trouble to write to me, also for sending me his last letter. Do you think it will be possible to receive his body now or will we have to wait until after the war? We are very thankful to you for letting us know in detail where my son's body is and just how he died. Would it be asking too much of you to please tell me

if they buried Albert with his ring? Do you think they will send me his medals? I will remember you in my prayers every day."

And from Captain Don Strother's wife:

"Denver, Colorado

"It's very comforting indeed to receive letters from Don's comrade in arms and to know that he was with his friend during his last days. I found his captain's bars in his trunk with the rest of the insignia. From Don's uniform which was returned I made for our boy, Toby, a little army uniform just like his father used to wear."

And from Lieutenant William T. Morgan's mother:

"Binghamton, New York

"Your splendid letter reached me oddly enough on Armistice Day, and it did a great deal for me. I was so glad to hear from one who had been in Java at the time my son met his death and who knew him personally.

"The small bag of clothes and the clock came to me. The money came to me in the form of a twenty-dollar check. I had no idea it was from someone who owed my son that amount. Your letter cleared that up. Thank you so much for all you went through to get these things to me. I shall always regret that I did not get to Texas or to Salt Lake City when my son was there.

"He was such a fine son. Bill read his Bible regularly and had a clear faith in God, and I pray when my time comes he will be 'there' to greet me. That gives me courage to go on. May God bless our leaders and help them find the

best possible way to an early peace for all countries that will last. Then those who have given their lives or been badly injured shall not have suffered in vain. And those who are left shall be proud for the result obtained.

"My prayers go out to all of you men who are bravely facing what is ahead. May God bless you in your work and bring you back safely to your family."

An Associated Press reporter came to my tent one day while I was writing to the mission in Wichita Falls, Texas, about Tommy Whitehead, Hal Walling, and some of the others of the 131st Field Artillery who had been captured by the Japs in Java. He introduced himself as Vern Haughland. We sat in an Australian truck and talked for some time about my work in Java.

Months later from a hospital in Brisbane he wrote to me:

"I don't know whether you read of my little experience in New Guinea, but I was lost there for over a month and would have starved but for the help of natives and missionaries and the kindness of the Almighty. Not being as religious as I should, I was ignorant of the things I needed most, but I learned a lot—lessons I pray never to forget. The Twenty-Third Psalm helped me as much as anything through the worst parts.

"Certainly I don't feel that I was worthy of being spared death, but since I was spared I should like to make myself a better person than I was before and lead a better life. In other words, I hope to become a truer Christian. One way, and one that I have neglected too often, is through churchly contact. A church and a religion mean much more to me now than before. I imagine, Chaplain Taggart, that you

find quite a number of men, faced with the realities of war, feeling that way these days."

That Easter in Melbourne was a holiday I'll never forget. It was Christmas and Easter rolled into one. Just before Easter Sunday we received our first mail from home and with it came our Christmas packages. A present which proved to be most popular was the subscription to *The Arizona Republic* from Reg Manning, a cartoonist on the Phoenix newspaper. The boys from Arizona used to read and reread the newspaper.

We had an early service in the mess hall Easter Sunday. The boys gathered flowers and leaves and with them we tried to convert the drab room into a chapel. Sergeant Jack Larsen was the soloist.

After the service I took Sergeant Chopping, Sergeant Peterson, and several others to town for breakfast at the well-known American Hospitality Center, then operated by about thirty-five American-born women who lived in Melbourne. Chopping, or "Choppie" as we called him, was "nursing" a nasty bullet wound he had received in Java. The bullet had entered his left lung through his chest, grazed his heart, and lodged in his backbone. His only thought was how soon he could get into combat again.

After a few weeks of rest and reorganization we left Melbourne on the banana boat, the *James Parker*. Our destination was Brisbane from which we were to be taken to Townsville.

We were all pleased to be going to an advanced base again. Soldiers are happiest when they are busy. Morale drops when there's not much to do.

After seven days of traveling by boat and train we arrived in Townsville, where we were greeted by Colonel Hobson, Captain Jack Hughes, and others.

Our new base was an Australian Army camp near the airfield. For the sake of camouflage the one-story wooden buildings were laid out to resemble a little village. Each of these buildings housed about thirty men. Our barracks were at the base of a little hill which looked like a sentinel standing guard over Townsville.

When it rained it was almost impossible to get around the camp because of the islands of mud that formed. When it didn't rain we were plagued by clouds of dust.

I flew into Longreach—about two hundred miles southwest of Townsville—where our 28th and 93d squadrons were stationed. I spent several days with the men. Sunday night, while I was preaching at a church in town, an elderly, kind-faced chaplain walked in. I knew that my "boss," Chaplain Ivan L. Bennett, had come. I felt like a young Timothy standing in the presence of a Paul.

After the service I went to his hotel room, where we talked for several hours. I was surprised to learn that Chaplain Bennett, who was now in charge of chaplains in Australia, was the editor of the much-appreciated "Song-and-Service Book for Ship and Field."

Next morning I flew back to Townsville with Chaplain Bennett in a ship piloted by Captain Clyde Webb, a West Point graduate.

When I learned that there were Negro troops near Cloncurry I decided to go there at once, since they had no Negro chaplain. I would be able to visit them and also see our men. I packed some Testaments, hymnbooks, and athletic

equipment, and left with Lieutenant Norvell and his crew who were flying some supplies to Cloncurry.

At about noon we landed at Cloncurry, where the flies and dust competed with each other to make the men miserable. I announced that I would hold a service at one o'clock, and a large group came in their fatigue clothes and shorts. Although it was hot and dusty, Sergeant Wood, Corporal Kenneth Bramscher, of Alpha, Minnesota, Private Howard E. Brown, of Clearfield, Pennsylvania, Staff Sergeant Edward McGuigan, and many others were in the recreational tent which we used for a chapel.

A splendid organization job had been done at the Negro camp. There was a feeling of permanency about the place although the men had been there only a short while. They had built neat corrals and stalls for their horses. They had a piano which was very much used, and they boasted a mighty good baseball team. Beside their mess hall they had constructed a hamburger stand.

After a delicious supper of hamburgers and pie I talked to the men about Christianity and complimented them on the chow and the orderliness and cleanliness of their camp. They beamed when they learned I was a Texan and a Baptist.

Next morning I climbed into a plane bound for Townsville. Lieutenant Charles Longacre was piloting. As we taxied down the field an expander tube in one of the wheels broke. A few minutes later we took off again. We were in the air only about three minutes when I heard a queer whizzing noise. The plane vibrated. I grabbed my parachute and poked my head into the cockpit.

"What's the matter?"

"It's a runaway prop."

I looked out and saw that our number 3 prop had been feathered. We circled slowly and landed. Two hours later we took off again, and the same thing happened. This time Lieutenant Longacre said we would have to wait till morning.

Major Sandy McPherson flew in from Townsville just as I was getting ready to leave again with Lieutenant Longacre. Soup Silva was with him, and I decided I'd fly back with them. Those three take-offs yesterday had me a little worried anyhow.

"Where're you going, Chaplain?" Longacre asked when he saw me heading for Sandy's plane.

"Thought I'd fly back with Sandy and have a gab fest with old Soup."

Longacre said nothing, but there was a look of disappointment on his face. I couldn't let Longacre think I was afraid to ride with him; that I preferred another pilot to him.

I returned to Longacre's plane and helped load the three stretcher cases into the belly of the ship. We tied the stretchers to the floor and then strapped the men securely to the stretchers. We acted as nurses for the patients. One soldier, his broken jaw wired together, became airsick and vomited almost continuously. Within a half-hour after we left Cloncurry we ran into a heavy rain that stayed with us until we almost reached Townsville. I was perspiring freely from caring for the patients by the time Longacre set the plane down.

After we got the patients settled in the hospital, Longacre walked off the field with me, his hand on my shoulder.

"I appreciate your staying with me, Chaplain. It meant a lot to me."

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Dengue fever finally caught up with me in May. While I was in the hospital at Townsville I met Lieutenant Frank Beeson from Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

The first thing Frank said to me when he was well enough to talk was, "Are you a Christian?"

There was nothing pious or holy-looking about Frank. He had a strong body and a delightful sense of humor that kept everyone at the hospital smiling. Frank possessed two qualities that I found not uncommon among our men: a derisive contempt for the enemy and an unshakable faith in God.

He always used the term "we" when he talked about the action that shattered his shoulder with an explosive shell.

"What do you mean 'we'?" I asked. "It's a single-seat fighter, isn't it?"

"Sure it's a single-seater, but I don't sit in the cockpit alone. I have a Person in the cockpit with me always who's on my side when I meet the Japs."

Telling his mother about the engagement with the Jap bombers he wrote:

". . . 'Twas in the merry month of May, tra-la, when the yellow bomb buds were bursting into full-size craters and the home saps displayed revitalized energies diving into fox holes. I was enjoying the sub-zero temperature of five miles' altitude and the rubbery smell of my oxygen mask when I spied a group of large airplanes proceeding toward— well, the place where I came from. Inquisitive-

ness comes forth and I go to take a closer look, which reveals many red spots before my eyes. To relieve this condition I turn loose a couple of guns, get a very good view of Slant-eyes, and dive underneath the formation. Then some little definitely not nice yellow man pokes a gun out of a hole in his miserable old airplane and slung a slug at me. Needless to say, my feelings were somewhat hurt at this harsh treatment, so I collected my pretties and went home. In the fleshy part of my right upper arm where I was hit the attending surgeon made the following exchange: four scraps of American steel were replaced by stitches of Japanese silk. . . ."

The doctors insisted that Frank would never be able to fly again. But Frank had other ideas. He exercised methodically day after day like an athlete preparing for a contest. Hour after hour he lay on his bed squeezing a rubber ball. Then slowly he began to raise his arm and move it from side to side.

"Yes siree, Bill, I'm going back into combat. These medics know lots about sewing a fellow up but they don't know that the Lord has plans for us. Heck, they're not sending me back to Alabama until we've mopped up the Japs."

Several weeks later I was riding across the field in a jeep with my portable organ, hymnbooks, and Bible. I had just finished a service. A B-17 was landing. I pulled up behind the Fortress.

"Hey, Bill! Hello there!" I heard from the plane.

It was Frank Beeson.

"Going to stay a spell at our hospital here?"

"Hospital! Hospital! Heck, no! I'm going up to Port Moresby to join the gang."

Not long after this meeting two pursuit pilots walked into a café in Townsville where I was sitting.

"Join me," I called to them. "You're pursuit pilots, aren't you?"

"How'd you know?"

"It's easy to pick out pursuit pilots. Say, do you know my friend Frank Beeson?"

They looked at each other for a moment, then one of them said: "We lost Frank the other day over Buna, New Guinea."

Almost a year later Frank's body was found in the jungles of Buna when our troops took the area away from the Japs. Although severely injured, he had crawled some distance from his plane. In his pocket was found an envelope addressed to the Forest Lake Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa. The amount of money he was planning to send his church was filled in.

Chapter Twenty-One

By the middle of July we were settled at our new field in Mareeba—a dry, barren plateau about two hundred miles north of Townsville. Only a reconnaissance squadron was left at Townsville. We were now within closer striking distance of the enemy and nearer our refueling base, Port Moresby.

I was glad that Major "Sandy" McPherson had suggested that I come along on that inspection trip of Mareeba with Major Jim Connally, Colonel William J. Kennard, our bomber command flight surgeon, Flight Lieutenant Church of the R.A.A.F., and the major in the Engineer Corps. I was able to estimate our needs in advance. I requisitioned a number of storage tents which we used as "day rooms" and also as chapels.

During those first few days at Mareeba Sandy McPherson, of Moscow, Idaho, was one of the busiest men around camp. He was in charge of "S-4," the group that had the responsibility of rounding up the supplies.

Mareeba was an improvement over the other bases because our various squadrons were close to each other. This meant I could visit them more frequently. I was able to see the men more often before they went off on missions. I could be at the field to help those who returned. I was closer to the ground crews. I was able to hold services every Sunday for all the men.

At seven-thirty in the morning I conducted services for headquarters squadron. It was impressive to see the men come to chapel from the mess hall, from the motor pool, and their tents. Nobody, it seemed, could get as much music out of my little organ as "Dutch" Worthimer.

Services for the Catholics were held at Saint Thomas Church in town. I arranged for trucks to pick up the boys at eight-thirty every morning in time for the nine-o'clock mass.

At nine-thirty I conducted services at the Second Station Hospital, where I ran into Sergeant Chopping.

"What, you shot up again, Choppy?"

"It's nothing much this time."

Chopping had been hit with shrapnel from the same explosive that took the life of Sergeant Gene E. Hickman. It was miraculous that Chopping had recovered from his last wound. Now he was wounded again.

"So long, Chaplain; thanks for the service," he waved.

"Take good care of yourself, Choppy."

"I will so I can get back at 'em."

At one in the afternoon I arranged services for one squadron and at six o'clock the men of another squadron worshiped with me in their "day room."

For the men of the third squadron I held services at nine

o'clock. The bomb-sight room wasn't a very churchlike atmosphere. There were automatic flying equipment, tools, radio apparatus, and some bunks in the room. But we blacked out the windows and Sergeant Wood started the singing. It doesn't take much to hold a service—just a Bible, some hymnbooks, and, most of all, the will to worship.

I spoke from Revelation, 21:22–27, dwelling mainly on: ". . . And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth . . . but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

After the service we sat around eating watermelon and thinking and talking about home.

We were still lacking a good deal of the recreational equipment we had requisitioned, so I flew back to Townsville with Major Connally, our commanding officer. I sat in the radio compartment of the B-17 chatting with Sergeant Alva Hascall and Soup Silva about that flight to Horn Island at the tip of Australia.

"Kinda good to have you here, Chaplain. I woulda felt lots better if you'd been with us on that flight to Horn Island," Soup said.

"Maybe they ought to assign a chaplain to every plane," Hascall put in.

"Not a bad idea," Silva replied. "Let's recommend it to the C.O."

Silva and Hascall had come to their first service only two weeks ago at Townsville.

"How's it you didn't get back before dark like we expected, Soup? We were pretty jittery."

"We got lost on the way back. For about three hours we

flew around and didn't know where we were going. We didn't know if we were over land or water. We put on our life jackets and parachutes. I went back to make sure everyone had their chutes on right. For some of the boys it was their first trip and they were nervous."

"I was doing plenty of praying, too, while I was trying to locate our course by D/F," Hascall said. "Our gas was running low. When we landed finally in Townsville we had only about five gallons of gas left per engine. Boy, terra firma sure felt good."

We were detained in Townsville until the following afternoon. I dragged several bundles of mail to the plane to bring back with me to Mareeba. Hascall and I handed the bags to Soup inside. As the engines were warming up Sandy McPherson drove up in a staff car and shouted: "Come on out, Soup. I want you to stay over and fly with me tomorrow."

Soup and Sandy stood on the field as we taxied off. Their arms were raised and their thumbs and forefingers formed circles—the happy-landing signal.

The next day at Mareeba, after morning chow, an Australian officer said to me, "I hear McPherson's dead."

"No. Can't be. It's the same old story. Just rumors."

"I heard it happened last night."

"Well, let's go ask Captain Smith. He'll know."

We walked together to the adjutant's tent.

"Say, Smitty, this's another rumor about Mac, isn't it?"

"It's true this time, Bill."

"It can't be, Smitty. Just yesterday . . .

"He was killed last night."

"Where?"

"Horn Island."

"Was Soup with him?"

"Yes. Soup was killed. So was Lieutenant Penick, Sergeant Bond, Corporal Hanson, Sergeant Schofield, and about ten others."

On Saturday the telegram Lieutenant Lucius Penick had been waiting for came. Just before we left Townsville on Thursday he ran to the plane and shouted, "You'd better have some news for me about my baby when I get to Mareeba!" Now the news was here. It was a baby boy, his wife had cabled.

I flew back to Townsville with Major Connally to see if there was anything we could do and to check the complete list of dead. The rumor had gotten around that there was a chaplain on Mac's plane. I had been flying so much that many of the men assumed it was I.

"Yep, fellas, it's him all right. In the flesh, too, not a ghost!" Sergeant Pat Patterson said to the boys as I entered the orderly room. I didn't pay any attention to that and walked into another shack where some officers were sitting.

Their mouths opened wide. Major Bill Lewis, commanding officer of the 14th Reconnaissance, looked at me.

"Is that you, Taggart?"

"I think so."

"And we were just saying what a nice guy you were."

"What's all the kidding for?"

"We thought you were on Mac's plane."

I learned later that it was Chaplain Albert M. Hart, a Presbyterian chaplain of a coast artillery unit, who had crashed with Mac's plane.

I flew with Major "Mat" Philip Mathewson to Horn

Island to recover the bodies, arrange for burials, and look for their personal possessions.

As we landed the Australians came running to us urging that we leave at once because they were afraid our plane would attract the Japs. They had been attacked several times in the last few days. We drove to the twisted, scorched wreck. The bodies had already been buried by the Australians.

We returned to Mareeba about seven in the evening. After a hurried chow I went for my organ and some hymn-books and held a service. Sergeant Hascall was there. Soup Silva was supposed to have come to the service with Hascall. It would have been Soup's second service.

Chapter Twenty-Two

WE WENT TO CAIRNS to look for Major Dean C. "Pinky" Hoevet and his crew of eleven who had crashed into the ocean.

The plane was near the beach, its tail end sticking out of the water. It was impossible to move the Flying Fortress so we could look for those who might be imprisoned under the wreck.

The entire population of Cairns came to help us find the bodies. For several days we searched the shark-infested water, wading waist high with the debris from the wreckage floating around us. We found one of our men floating about five miles from the plane. His neck was broken; the flesh eaten away by the sharks. Another body, slimy and bloated, legs, arms, and neck broken, was found by some Australian children on the beach.

Colonel Arthur Bell and I decided that it was useless to continue the search for the bodies of the other six.

At about eleven o'clock Friday morning we placed the

six bodies in brown wooden coffins. Over each of them we draped an American flag. The caskets were carried into the city hall and placed at the far end of the council room on a long table. At the heads were banks of beautiful flowers from the people of Cairns. An honor guard of three—an Australian soldier and sailor and an American soldier—stood at attention near the caskets. Silently the people of Cairns and Australian and American military personnel passed through the room.

Two of the dead—Ralph Tarod and Bernard Merker—were Jewish. I telephoned Mareeba and requested that they fly a Jewish prayer book to me.

They gathered for the memorial services on the city hall lawn at about two in the afternoon. There were groups from the Australian Navy, Air Force, Army, and Nurses Corps, American soldiers, and hundreds of Australian civilians. Australian flags flew at half-mast throughout the town and the American flag was on the city hall flagpole.

Thirty-six American soldiers brought the coffins out on the city hall lawn. Mr. Collis, a citizen of Cairns, sang a solo, "The Trumpeter." Then I delivered the obituary, reading the names of the twelve men who had been killed on the plane.

I opened the Jewish prayer book that had been flown to me just a few minutes before and read the memorial prayer, the "Kaddish":

"To the departed whom we now remember, may peace and bliss be granted in life eternal. May he find grace and mercy before the Lord of heaven and earth. May his soul rejoice in that ineffable good which God has laid up for

those who fear Him, and may their memory be a blessing unto those who treasure it. May the Father of peace send peace to all who mourn, and comfort to all the bereaved among us. Amen."

Colonel Arthur Bell and the mayor of the town, Mr. Collins, paid tribute to the twelve Americans. "There Is No Death" was sung, after which I delivered the memorial message. Only a few words were spoken, as hearts were heavy.

A firing squad of twelve American soldiers faced the ocean toward America and fired their salutes. As the sound of the volleys died away, Taps were sounded, and the pallbearers carried the coffins into the city hall.

Saturday the coffins were put on the train for Townsville, where burial was to take place. I arrived with the bodies on Saturday night.

At the cemetery the next day they were laid away to rest with full military honors. A young Jewish soldier from the American Army read the Jewish burial prayers and I conducted the services for the others.

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I left Townsville on the first plane headed for Mareeba. After we leveled off Major Sam Maddux, the pilot, called me into the cockpit.

"How many parachutes do we have, Chaplain?"

"We have none, Sam, and you know it!"

Sam looked at me and grinned. He knew we had none.

It wasn't unusual to fly without parachutes during those days. We had a limited number which were reserved for ships going into combat.

We circled the landing field after about an hour of flying. Things didn't look normal. There were ambulances and trucks moving around. Men in white fire-fighting asbestos suits were on the field.

We finally got the call to land. They quickly directed us off the runway and onto a taxi strip. I jumped out through the back door and yelled, "What's up!"

"The flight was hit this morning. Captain Webb and his crew crashed in the ocean. All gone."

Colonel Richard Carmichael, who had replaced Major Connally as commanding officer of the 19th Bombardment Group, drove up. "Stand by, Bill, some of the planes may have to make crash landings. There may be work for you."

As he was talking one plane roared onto the field. It turned slowly and taxied to a position just behind our plane. The rear door opened and a young lieutenant signaled for the ambulance. The doctor, Captain Jacob Gottlieb, came up to examine Lieutenant David Hirsch, who had been hit in the leg.

"Chaplain, say, Chaplain," the pilot, Captain John Chiles, called through the window, "for heaven's sake get this body out of here. I've been flying for four hours sitting here looking at him."

I opened the escape hatch and pulled myself up into the plane. It was Sergeant E. W. Snyder, from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. A shell had exploded just above the nose of the ship, blowing off the back of his skull and injuring the left leg of Lieutenant Hirsch. I lowered the body to the ground with the help of a sergeant.

Other planes were coming in. One plane was having trouble. It circled the field time after time, prepared to

come in, and then climbed. The ambulances and trucks were ready. The men in asbestos suits were standing by. The plane started to approach the field again. It came nearer, nearer, and touched the ground. Everyone was relieved. Then someone screamed.

"Get off that runway!"

One wheel shot off the plane. The ship spun to the right and crashed into some trees. The fire fighters ran to the wrecked plane. But fortunately there was no fire. The plane was riddled with bullets. However, only Staff Sergeant L. H. Penwarden was injured.

We buried Sergeant Snyder and thought also of the nine others who had been buried with their plane in the ocean: Captain Clyde H. Webb, Major H. Welsie, Lieutenant P. Reise, Lieutenant S. A. Ford, Sergeant C. I. Roberts, Sergeant J. Kiminicki, Corporal F. G. Antone, Private H. W. Davis, and Private R. B. Weeks.

Chapter Twenty-Three

DURING THE NIGHT I was thrown from my cot by an explosion. I scrambled to my feet and looked out of the tent. The sky was illumined as if by fireworks. I saw lights in the buildings and knew it wasn't an air raid. As I was dressing an explosion more violent than the first shook the tent.

"Chaplain! Chaplain!" someone in a near-by tent shouted as he ran toward me. "There's been a crack-up!"

I went quickly to the valley where the plane had crashed. Some of the men who thought we had been attacked by the Japs were coming out of the slit trenches. We stood at a distance watching the flames and waiting for all the bombs to explode.

Privates Harold Davitt and Ben Mitek brought me some sheets. A gloomy, gray early-morning mist hung over the valley as we searched for the remains. Dismembered bodies and the wreckage of the Flying Fortress were strewn all over the field.

We found an arm and placed it in one of the sheets. I knew whose it was from the inscription on the crash brace-

let. Another I recognized by the jacket he wore. Some could be identified only by their "dog tags." Near a tree we came upon one dressed in a woolen flying suit. Most of his clothes were burned. He was lying face down. I knelt beside him and turned him over. I expected to see a face I knew, but there was no face. The force of the crash and the explosions had ripped the flesh away. His skull was cracked, the insides clearly visible.

A soldier came to help. We were walking along the bomb-pitted field looking for bodies. He stumbled and fell.

"Chaplain, look! Look!"

He had tripped over a leg that had been torn from one of the bodies. He got to his feet, but his knees seemed to buckle. I put my arm around his waist.

"Steady, now."

"It's terrible, Chaplain," he said weakly.

"It's even more terrible if they weren't ready to die."

With the help of Andy Smith, the funeral director from Mareeba, we worked for hours trying to identify all the bodies. It was a gruesome, sickening task. Some of the men became ill and had to leave.

By midafternoon we had checked the remains against the list of those who had been in the plane. Captain Hershell Henson of Upland, California, and his crew of eight were now ready for burial. Before the end of the day two more from another flight and one who had dropped dead in the sick tent were added to the row of nine caskets.

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After a while I suppose every chaplain in combat is in need of a "morale officer." I used to call Sergeant Alva Has-

call my morale officer. He was always around with a word of encouragement.

I was sitting in my tent, depressed. There had been many casualties. Services had not been well attended the day before. Hascall put his head in the tent.

"Can I come in, Chaplain?"

"Sure."

"Feelin' blue?"

"A little, I guess."

"Not so many came to chapel, huh? Is that what has you down?"

"Partly. Look at this."

Hascall took the letter out of my hand, started to read aloud:

"'If it's at all possible to give comfort to a mother who has learned that her son's body has been crushed and burned to death, then your letter has done that. I don't suppose his watch was found. He must have had other things that we could get comfort out of having—just something that we knew he had touched. He was such a good boy. Robert was our youngest son. We have been planning on bringing his body back after the war, but now we don't know what to do. We don't want to keep hoping for it if it can't be done. If you were in our place, what would you do? Was there anything left of him to bring back? Please, Mr. Taggart, I can take it—would you please tell me . . .'"

Hascall stopped reading and sat down beside me on the cot. "Well, I'd rather be up there battling the Japs than to have to be writing letters to those mothers and wives.

By the way, do you remember Lieutenant Burkey's flight?"

"All but one were saved, weren't they?"

"Yeah, but did you hear the story about 'G-Willie' Schmid?"

"I know he got back all right."

"He says he owes his life to something you said in a sermon."

"G-Willie said that!"

"Yeah. Remember you preached last week about King David and Solomon? Well, after he bailed out he lands in a tree all bruised with some of his bones broken. There's a bush fire below from the crack-up and he hasn't the strength to undo his chute buckles. Well, he's just hanging there thinking he's gonna die. All of a sudden he remembers the words of David you preached: 'Show thyself a man.' So he says to himself: 'I'm man enough to get out of this.' Well, he begins to lift himself up, and it hurts so much he thinks he's gonna pass out. But he just keeps right on pushing and twisting until he gets clear, then he undoes the chute and gets away."

Not G-Willie Schmid! Only a short while ago he had seen Captain Bernice Barr putting a Testament into his shirt pocket before taking off on a mission. "We don't need that with us, do we?" he scoffed.

I remembered the service at which I talked about King David and Solomon. G-Willie was there, but he didn't seem to be listening. I remembered being disturbed because so few had come. Then as I talked I thought of Chaplain Bennett's advice to "preach and preach well, even if it is only to one man. You never know when or how God's word will help."

"But here's the pay-off," Hascall continued. "Schmid saw Lieutenant Burkey reading his Testament as they were flying back shortly before the trouble started so he says to him that he doesn't want anyone around him reading that stuff. So I asked G-Willie if he doesn't think that maybe Burkey's reading the Bible and praying like he did is the reason why they're alive now. And do you know what G-Willie says? He says, 'I think you're right.'"

"How were they found, Hascall?"

"Lieutenant Burkey says he just prayed all the time he was floating down in his chute. As he crawled through the jungle toward the beam of light he continued to pray. He got to the beach exhausted and thirsty. He wrote in the sand in large letters the word: 'W-A-T-E-R,' and collapsed when he finished the 'R.' His body near the writing on the sand attracted the rescue plane. Natives and missionaries helped find some of the others."

"What's that?"

Hascall went outside the tent and looked up.

"There's a plane circling the field."

"Is there a flight due back?"

"Maybe it's Major Lindberg and his men."

Major Allen Lindberg and his crew were almost a week overdue. The searching parties had found nothing.

We ran out to the field. The plane had already landed. Several men jumped out. Their jackets were bleached white and stiff. Their faces were bearded and blistered.

"It's Lindberg!"

I started to shake hands with Major Lindberg. He drew back, smiled, and held up his hands. They were red and sore. His lips were swollen and cracking.

"We're back here, Chaplain Bill, by the mercies of God," he said. "We never expected to see this field again."

I helped the men into my car and drove them to their squadron headquarters.

"We crashed early in the morning," Lindberg explained. "We just had time to shove off on two rubber rafts without a crumb of food or a drop of water. We were all pretty worried—all except Hernandez here. Right away he starts praying. After a while he says that help is on the way. We ask him what does he mean? How does he know? He says to us he don't know how or when but *something* tells him that we will be saved."

I looked at Sergeant Hilario Hernandez, the tail gunner, a quiet, dark-complexioned, conscientious lad, who had frequently come to services.

"It's the gospel truth, Chaplain," Hernandez said. "I was only praying for a few minutes when I felt like God heard me and was taking a hand to help us out. From then on, no matter how tough it got, I was sure we'd come through all right."

"You've no idea what hell is like until you're crowded in a rubber bubble without food or water and left to drift beneath a broiling sun," Lindberg continued. "Toward evening we thought we saw the peaks of mountains in the west. When they dissolved into mist, Hernandez just prayed harder. Soon he gets the rest of us to pray and sing with him."

"What did you sing, Hernandez?" I asked.

"We sang 'Rock of Ages' and 'Lead Kindly Light.' On the second day our lips were too cracked and our tongues too swollen for much singing. But the prayers never

stopped," Lindberg said. "Then something happened. We felt a current reach us and hurry us along. Before night we saw the silhouette of palm trees, the white streak of surf and, almost beyond belief, the black hulls of three outrigger canoes."

"Who were they?"

"Our rescuers were Australian aborigines—black-skinned fishermen from the mainland many miles away. They were on their way home, they said, when a strange urge came over them to come fishing here. They didn't expect to catch anything, but they couldn't resist the impulse to come. *Something* compelled them to change their course and steer for this uninhabited and worthless bit of coral."

"And did they catch anything?" someone asked as Lindberg, Hernandez, and the others got out of my car.

"Nothing, just us."

"What a disappointment, huh?"

"Not to us. For my money those kinky-haired lads are the best fishermen in the whole world—even better than me!"

"So long, Chaplain. Thanks for the lift."

"Nice to see you again."

"So long."

I fell asleep in my tent thinking of G-Willie Schmid and Hernandez and Lindberg and how simply and effectively the Lord does His work.

Chapter Twenty-Four

GENERAL GEORGE C. KENNEY, commander of the Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific area, came to present our group with four hundred individual decorations. We didn't have a band, so I rigged up the phonograph to the public-address system so we could have music with the marching. General Kenney thought it a good idea.

It was a hot afternoon, and the men weren't used to parading. But General Kenney's talk and the decorations left them in better humor. The general told us what we had been accomplishing and gave us medals which we could show the folks at home—if we got home.

After the general left, the men chatted about American exploits against the Japs. They sounded like a squad of football players reviewing the plays that had won for them the coveted trophy.

There was that large Jap aircraft carrier that we sank out of Java, reminisced the boys of an old bombardment group. What a big baby that was! And how about that flight to

the Philippines to rescue General Douglas MacArthur and his party by Major Frank Bostrom and others? It would be a long time before we'd forget that. Then there was that tough assignment to fly ground troops to Port Moresby. They said this helped save the port for the Allies. What a job we did in the Coral Sea! Did you ever see so many ships sink? They looked like clay pigeons at a shooting gallery. Boom! Boom! Boom! One after the other they sank. And we didn't lose a man. Now don't forget Buna Bay. We did a whale of a job there too. And say, talking of tough ones, we even licked those brush flies at Cloncurry, one of the boys of the 30th Squadron boasted, and everyone laughed. And how about a round of praise for the old B-17? She did everything for us. When we needed a pursuit ship she was it. Sure, and we used her for a dive-bomber and long-range bomber too! Didn't we take her into missions without fighter protection? And when those Zeros came, didn't we do a neat job with her guns? Sure, let's pin a medal on those B-17's too!

Master Sergeants James W. Wyatt and Leslie L. Wells walked by and I thought how they, too, had so much to boast about. They were with the ground crews who kept the planes in the air. Through heat and rain, with makeshift tools, with little rest they worked day and night. This was an important job often just taken for granted.

I listened to them and wondered what I had accomplished. What was my "box score" of these months in combat? Had the men changed much? Had my work helped for victory?

On the surface no great change had taken place among the men during the year of combat. Most of those who

cursed before Pearl Harbor still cursed. There were some who, when they used profane language in my presence, would turn to me and say: "Sorry, Chaplain, it's just that I get mad and can't find a better word."

Most of those who liked liquor before the war still drank when they got into town. But it wasn't infrequent that a man would leave my tent saying: "I felt like going on a real bender just before I came to see you."

Although we organized as many recreational activities as possible, there were still many who gambled for relaxation.

No, my presence among them hadn't changed their lifetime thinking and habits. I learned soon after Pearl Harbor that my chief contribution toward victory would be in my ability to keep the men conscious that they were fighting on God's side and aware of what He expected of them.

Not as many as I hoped had attended services. But the record was good. I had a congregation of men from every section of the country. Some had gone to church before the war. Others had not. Those who had been churchgoers attended my services, and many who hadn't been to church since childhood started to come. I wondered if they would continue to attend church services after the war and remembered the sergeant who had told me about "some postwar plans of my own."

"You know, Chaplain, I've been readin' about those plans they have for us after we get back. I'm not so sure we'll have all them fancy things they're promisin'. Sometimes I get sick of readin' about 'em. Sounds like maybe they're having the war so they can have postwar plans. Looks sometimes like they're holdin' out a lollipop to a bunch of kids. But, anyway, I got some postwar plans of my own, and that's to

go to church if I get home and to get to know my minister just like I got to know you."

There was no startling record of conversions. I felt, however, that many who hadn't thought much about the Lord now had a greater understanding and faith in Him. Some had been converted. When it happened it came simply—so simply that when it was over you wondered if it had really happened.

A mess sergeant came to my tent to get a mess kit. On the way out he said, "I was thinking, Chaplain, about what you said about being ready to die. I don't feel like I'm ready."

"Sit down, Murph. Aren't you a Christian?"

"No, I guess not."

There was no great dramatic revelation necessary. He was seeking God, and I was there merely to help him find the way.

Like the woman at the well in Samaria who came to get water and left knowing Christ as her Saviour, so Murph came to my tent for a mess kit and left accepting the Lord.

And Hal Walling who said to me when I last saw him in Java: "Since I've been in combat I think about God all the time. I feel like a kid who's been away from home a long time and when he gets back he just wants to hang around his mama."

Those who turn to religion in combat are not men afraid to die; they are not weak men seeking a haven in religion. These are strong men with an unfaltering conviction that they are fighting on God's side. This belief and faith in Him help them to withstand unbelievable hardships and suffering; help them to fight on to victory against superior strength.

From talks I have had with other chaplains I am convinced that their experiences have been very much the same as mine, and so I feel safe in saying that out of the war has grown a tendency on the part of the men fighting it to turn more than ever to religion. Sometimes it is not apparent on the surface. It manifests itself instead in a more intense thoughtfulness, in a sympathetic attitude toward the other men, in a greater willingness to accept the bitter risks of warfare. It has not only made them better men but better soldiers.

Sergeant Hascall sat down next to me.

"You look buried in thoughts, Chaplain."

"Just been thinking about the past year."

"Why think about last year? Why not think about next year? We might be home by then."

"When the general was giving out those medals this afternoon I was wondering what I had accomplished. Those boys talking about all the planes they shot down and the Jap ships they've sunk got me to thinking about my own work."

"Well, old Soup Silva had the answer to your question, Chaplain. Remember he said we ought to have a chaplain in every plane? If I ever get back I'll go straight to the Chief in Washington—the President himself—and make the recommendation for Soup."

"That might be against the Geneva convention agreement."

"Well, maybe we ought to start breaking a few agreements like the Japs and Nazis do. You know what I was thinking about when General Kenney was pinning those medals on us?"

"What?"

"I was thinking of Hegdahl. He shoulda been here this afternoon to get a medal."

"You were in the plane with him when he was hit, weren't you?"

"He was my assistant radio operator. Boy, what a surprise when he swung the tail guns on those Japs and got a couple of them! What a scrap that was! We were jumped by fifteen fighters. I was in the radio compartment. My first thought was something I heard many times in the old days—that a fellow is worth just three minutes of combat in the air. So for some reason I looked at my watch. Then I looked at it again a few minutes later and saw that four minutes had gone by. So I said to myself, I guess this isn't my time.

"What made me fighting mad was their putting a couple of explosives in my radio set. I took the rear guns, neither of which was working. There was only one thing to do—that was to repair them. I did this and managed to get into the running scrap which lasted all the way up to 20,000 feet. When we shook them I noticed the lack of oxygen and started to figure out how I could make a mask for Hegdahl. I had some hose and a new mask in the radio compartment. So I went up and fixed up the mask, then returned to the tail-gun position and placed the mask on Hegdahl. When I got back to the radio compartment I almost collapsed. I really needed oxygen. Wheee! What a feeling! After we shook them off I repaired my radio set, which made it possible to radio Kendari for fuel and medical attention for Hegdahl."

I went to see Captain Bernice Barr. He was leaving on a well-earned ten-day furlough. There were some things I wanted him to buy for me.

Barr was standing there with a group of men.

"It's all off, Chaplain," Barr said.

"What's off?"

"The furlough."

"No!"

"Yup, we're going on a long flight, so they've canceled our leave." The rest of the boys nodded.

What a shame. They needed the rest so much. Flight fatigue was setting in. The men were getting irritable. They needed to get away from the field.

"Well, I don't know what to say. I'm disappointed; sorry you're not going."

"Just say congratulations."

"Congratulations! Congratulations for what?"

"We're going home, Preacher!" Barr grinned.

"We're going home!" they all chimed in.

I could hardly believe it. For many weeks we had been thinking of returning to the United States. The rumor that we were going home had drifted into Mareeba early in September.

At the beginning I was deluged with questions. Could they take their Australian wives with them? What was going to happen to the 19th Bombardment Group? They began to look with renewed hope at the photos of their girl friends. "Will you marry us when we return, Chaplain?"

We watched eagerly for replacements—a sign that we might leave. But the replacements didn't come. For a while there was little talk about anything else but going home.

"I thought you said we were going to see a post-season football game, Chaplain!"

"He didn't say how long after the season."

"Didn't Roosevelt say we'd be home by Christmas?"

"We will. He didn't say which Christmas!"

When weeks went by and there was still nothing official I began to think that perhaps the wish was father of the rumor. If, after a while, the men didn't stop thinking about going home, at least there was less talking about it. The business of blasting the Japs had to go on. The war couldn't stop for tired men to rest. Until replacements could be brought they would have to continue to go into combat.

But here at last was the order to return. The 93d Squadron was to leave first under the leadership of Colonel Carmichael. Soon the others would follow.

All afternoon I helped them get ready for the take-off. Barracks bags and flight bags were packed. Everything possible was to be left for those who would succeed them.

Friday evening we gathered in the orderly room. Colonel Carmichael introduced General Kenneth Walker, commander of the bomber command, who had flown in to say good-by to our boys. He wished them a safe journey home and thanked them for their fine work, especially during these early days of the war when they sustained so much of the burden alone.

At four in the morning the pilots and navigators were in the briefing room receiving their flight instructions while the crews stood outside exchanging jokes, all confident that they would make their flight home successfully.

Driving Captain Barr and his crew to the plane was like the beginning of a picnic. My little Chevrolet car was over-

flowing with fifteen men who behaved like kids on their way to the circus. They were going home.

I climbed into the plane. Number-one engine was started and then they tried number two. But the self-starter wouldn't work. Sergeant G-Willie Schmid became restless. They tried again, but it wouldn't turn over. G-Willie grabbed the hand crank and shouted: "Let me at it! I'll crank her all the way home if necessary!"

I stood in the cockpit behind Barr as the huge plane rolled slowly down the taxi strip onto the runway.

"Good-by, men. Here's some cake and candy for you."

"Thanks, Chaplain."

"Why doncha come with us?"

"Sure, stow away!"

"No, fellows," I answered, "I'll be leaving on a transport with the ground crew. I'll be able to do much more on that long ocean trip. So long, boys."

"Good-by, Chaplain. See you in Texas."

"So long. God protect you."

I jumped from the plane. The roar of the four superchargers filled the air. Bernice waved to me. I gave the happy-landing signal, he released the brakes, and they were flying home.

It was about three weeks before the last of the combat crews got their orders to return. Those were three long, difficult weeks. Those were the weeks when the men were making plans for home. The orders were expected any day, but until they came they had to continue to go on missions —missions from which some of them might not return.

But now all the combat crews were on their way home.

The last of the squadrons had left. Major Elbert "Butch" Hilton, the commanding officer, was leading them.

Last week we lost a plane with the entire crew. They had been only one week from home.

And Sergeant Robert D. Chopping—he, too, wasn't going home. Choppy had been wounded twice. They considered it a miracle when he recovered.

When anyone said: "What, you going into combat again after being shot up like you were!" Choppy would reply: "Heck, what'm I here for anyhow? I came to fight the Japs, and that's all I'm doing."

General Kenney had pinned a medal on Choppy too. He stuck out his chest boyishly and smiled broadly when I took his picture.

"When you gonna have that picture of me, Chaplain?" he said as he went into combat three days before his group was ordered home.

"I'll have it when you get back, Choppy."

"Thanks. Think of me, Chaplain."

I knew he meant *pray* for me.

"I will, Choppy. So long."

Bullets weren't enough to stop Choppy. The Japs tried that twice, but each time he recovered and went back in the air to shoot down Zeros, drop bombs on ships, blast Jap troop concentrations and airfields. They had to blow his leg off and out of the plane before they could kill him.

Captain Richard Hernlund of San Antonio, Texas, pilot of the flight, told me about it as he slumped in a chair at the officers' club. Dick was so worn and tired. He seemed to have aged years.

"We had orders to get the cruiser. Weather was bad and

so we attacked from low altitude. We got the ship, but an explosive shell hit our tail. I heard Chopping call: 'They got me!' Somebody ran back to him. There was a large hole in the body of the plane. Choppy was hanging partly out of the plane. His leg was gone. The pull of the air stream was sucking the blood out of him. We dragged Choppy to a flat place and wrapped him up. We tried to give him some dope, but he was gone."

Now only the ground crew was left. For a while there would be no more missions for our combat crews. Bernice Barr, G-Willie Schmid, and the rest in that flight had already arrived safely.

Until Barr's cable came from the United States I hadn't thought about going home. Somehow, during all the preparations, it hadn't occurred to me that the orders to return included me. Now, as I read Barr's cable, I realized that soon I, too, would be leaving. We would go as soon as the replacements came.

I tried to remember my home, but the harder I tried the more hazy it all became. Home seems to get far away from you after a year in combat. Methodically I tried to figure out how I would get to my house from the railroad station in Abilene. I was puzzled when I found I couldn't remember. I felt as if I had been here all my life. My parents, my friends, my home—they all seemed part of a vivid dream that I couldn't quite recollect.

While we waited for the new ground crew to arrive I started to make plans. What was I going to do when I came home? I'd visit with my parents, see Homer Reynolds and some of my other friends in Wichita Falls. And if there was time I would contact the parents and wives of the men

we lost. But what after that? I found that I had no plans. What plans can you have at home when our men are fighting throughout the world? When every day they are giving their lives? After some time in combat a man needs a furlough, they said. After a rest they might send me to a combat zone again.

Near the end of November the new ground crew arrived. We traveled by rail to Townsville. There we boarded the Norwegian ship, the S.S. *Torrens,* and sailed for America.

Chapter Twenty-Five

ON THE DUSTY, windswept field at Pyote, Texas, "Tojo's Jinx" rested next to the other planes that had been flown back from Australia.

"Tojo's Jinx" was back in the United States without Soup Silva, Hegdahl, and the many others who had fought in her so valiantly. But the circles Soup had painted on her side to number the Jap victims of his gunfire were still there. Inside the plane I saw the floor which had been saturated with Hegdahl's blood. Soup and I had cleaned it up in Java. I looked at the floor and heard again Soup's gruff, friendly voice: "I got a job for you, Chaplain—a job that needs some religion. You wanna help?"

I leaned against the Flying Fortress and watched the preparations for the review and decorations. The stand for General Olds and his staff was ready on the ramp. The band from the Davis-Montham Field in Tucson, Arizona, was on the field.

A sergeant from our ground crew passed.

"Big day, eh, Chaplain?"

"Could be bigger."

"Yeah, if the others were here too. We better get going. They'll be startin' soon."

I marched with the 30th Squadron. I don't think our marching was very good. In its report of the event the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* wrote: "What the 19th Group lacked in marching precision they made up in valor."

As the last of our squadrons passed in review before the stand, a formation of twenty-five B-17's of the 93d Bombardment Group flew over the field for the aerial review. I glanced at our battle-scarred bombers as the new Flying Fortresses flew in groups of three, one on top of the other, resembling an eight-story house. While the groups of three were peeling off the formation I prayed that there would never again be any need for men to go to war; that we would always be a peacetime congregation.

The ceremony ended just in time. A dust storm was beginning to blow up. Parents, wives, brothers, and sisters were hurrying off the field with their men admiring the decorations and chatting gaily. Some parents and widows were leaving the field alone.

I returned to "Tojo's Jinx."

"Hi there, Chaplain Taggart." A sergeant came over and leaned against the plane. "I wanted to say good-by to you. Before I go I just wanna tell you I didn't realize until I came back how swell it was to have you with us. I didn't realize it until I got home and went to church on Sunday. While I was sitting there I said to myself: 'There's an awful lot we didn't have in combat, but we always had church services, we always had Chaplain Taggart to come to.' I

guess the best way I can thank you for what you done is to tell you that I'm gonna continue to go to church and try to be a good Christian. So long, Chaplain."

He left, and I thought this is my real decoration.

The dust was beginning to whirl around me. My parents had taken shelter in one of the buildings. I had better be getting back to them, I thought.

Lieutenant Hascall came along.

"Paying your respects to 'Tojo's Jinx,' Chaplain?"

"To 'Tojo's Jinx' and to those who flew her."

Hascall looked at the line of bombers, brought his hand up to his forehead in a quick salute, and said: "To 'Tojo's Jinx,' to those who flew her, and to those who died in her."

MY FIGHTING CONGREGATION

BY CHAPLAIN WILLIAM C. TAGGART

THIS, the first book by a front-line chaplain with the 19th Bombardment Group, shows how much the American soldiers are turning to inspirational and religious leadership and something of what it means to them.

While preaching in Wichita Falls, Texas, young William Taggart was conscious of a disagreement in his own mind with much of the talk he heard in church circles. War was on the way, and many of his friends and associates were saying that the Church had no concern with fighting. Taggart knew better. If war came—and he was sure it was not far off—it would be an all-out struggle and all Christian men would have a part to play.

He was so sure of this that he resigned from his small pastorate and enlisted. At first he found his new congregation made up of regular soldiers, and a rough, tough lot in the main, quite different from the devout group who had sat under him in Texas. It happened, however, that the 19th Bombardment Group was on board ship en route to the Far East on December 7, 1941, and when the news of Pearl Harbor came to them by radio a change came over these young fighting pilots. They seemed to realize suddenly that they were facing eternity; their attitude toward their padre changed perceptibly. From that moment he realized that he had a new congregation indeed—one of fifteen hundred serious young men who knew they had a heavy job to do and were no longer careless of the inspirational help he offered.

The airmen's interest in religious matters and in eternity became greater when they were involved in the tragic defense of the East Indies. They fought in Java and figured in a spectacular evacuation. After being landed in North Australia, they saw plenty of action side by side with the Anzac forces. The thirty-year-old chaplain was with them at every stage, and the slogan he had coined, "Keep 'em worshiping," was having its effect. The services held on jungle airfields and in rude hangars were always well attended. Without being in any sense the typical fighting padre of war fiction, Captain Taggart quite clearly had a quiet quality which gave him a place in the ranks and in the regard of the men.

The chaplain tells his story without pulling any punches. His Fighting Congregation was there to kill Japs, and he tells how thoroughly they went about it. At the same time, without ever becoming preachy, he never forgets his personal reason for being there; and, as a serious undertone to the record of death and destruction, he gives a picture of what his comrades thought and felt, the problems they brought him, the fact that they were becoming as much interested in the welfare of their souls as of their bodies, sometimes much more. It is a strong and moving document, a war book of a different kind.

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